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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

THE CONCEPT OF GOD IN THE WORKS OF WOLFGANG BORCHERT

BY

ERWIN JOHN WARKENTIN

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
OF MASTER OF ARTS.

IN

GERMAN LITERATURE

DEPARTMENT OF GERMANIC LANGUAGES

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

FALL 1990

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Date: ____________________

DEDICATION

To Sylvia, Erwin II and Tatiana.

Abstract

This thesis examines the concept of God in the works of Wolfgang Borchert. Such an investigation is accomplished by tracing various socio-ideological and literary influences on Borchert's works.

The first chapter outlines various interpretations of Borchert's God-concept. It demostrates the short-comings of viewing Borchert as a Nihilist and Gottesleugner, and sets the parameters for a new reading of his works.

Part A. of the second chapter deals with the influence of Borchert's social environment, and how it may have determined, in part, his attitude towards God. Part B. investigates Borchert's home environment and how it served as the basis for his interpretation of God. Part C. and D. present comparisons that may be made between the concept of God as found in Nietzsche and Barlach, and the God-concept as found in Borchert's works.

The third chapter presents Borchert's God-concept as is found in his poetry, short stories and the play Draußen vor der Tür. It demonstrates that Borchert's God-concept has up until now been misunderstood.

The final chapter tenders a reinterpretation of Borchert's God-concept, in light of Borchert's socio-ideological and literary influences. It comes to the conclusion that Borchert's God-concept is positive rather than negative; God is a positive force, rather than negative or non-existent.

The thesis concludes that Borchert used his literature to search for an authentic God, and that the search for God is the first step in removing the barriers which exist between man and God. It also concludes that a great deal of work remains to be done before a full understanding of Borchert's works may be reached.

Acknowledgements

This thesis would not have reached completion were it not for the advice and support of a number of people. In acknowledging their contribution I hope to, in some small way, repay a great debt.

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I. Introduction

The purpose of this thesis is to analyze socio-ideological and literary influences on the concept of God in the works of Wolfgang Borchert, and the thesis will then offer a reinterpretation of Borchert's God concept. Evidence from Borchert's home and social environment will serve as a first step in determining whether the current interpretation is sufficient, or whether there are gaps in scholarship, which have led to inconsistencies. Furthermore, the influence of Barlach and Nietzsche, which up to this point in time has been largely ignored by scholars, will be traced in Borchert's works. From this comparison a link will be established between the works of Barlach, Nietzsche and Borchert, which will shed new light on the manner in which Borchert presented his God-concept. Secondly, from the manner in which Borchert presented his God-concept, Borchert's own God-concept will be constructed, indicating what he believed to be the true nature of God. From this second step one will then be able to see how Borchert envisioned the possible interaction between God and man.

Wolfgang Borchert's life coincides with one of the most turbulent periods of German history. The years of his short life (1921-1947) brace the years of the rise and fall of Nazi power in Germany. Borchert was one of the first German writers to attempt to come to grips with the Zertrümmerung of post-World War II Germany. He has also been labelled as the spokesman of the "lost generation", because in his writings he articulated the emotions of a generation unable to elucidate its situation.

If one views Borchert as a spokesman for his generation only, one could come to the conclusion that his works are no longer relevant today. However, Borchert himself did not intend his writing to be simply a document of his times. In his first manifesto, "Das ist unser Manifest,"[1] Borchert indicates that he is addressing his own generation when he uses the first person plural throughout. However, in his last work, "Dann gibt es nur eins!"[2] written about one month before his death, he exclusively uses the second person singular and plural, indicating that he has moved beyond matters concerning only his own generation.

In addressing future generations, Borchert attempts to outline how his own had been betrayed. His motif of betrayal becomes apparent in a third manifesto "Generation ohne Abschied":

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[1] Borchert, Das Gesamtwerk (Hamburg: Rowohlt Verlag, 1949) 308-15.

[2] Borchert, Das Gesamtwerk 318-21.

> Aber sie gaben uns keinen Gott mit, der unser Herz hätte halten können, wenn die Winde dieser Welt es umwirbelten. So sind wir die Generation ohne Gott, denn wir sind die Generation ohne Bindung, ohne Vergangenheit, ohne Anerkennung.[3]

Borchert's analysis of reasons behind the catastrophe of his times is unconventional. For him, the problem lies in the lack of a God relevant to the current situation, not in the absence of a God who simply conforms to individual wishes.

The most important theme to be found in Borchert's prose works is that of the _Heimkehrer_ as portrayed in his play _Draußen vor der Tür_,[4] and his short stories: "Die lange lange Straße lang",[5] and "Die Küchenuhr"[6] among others. Borchert's _Heimkehrer_ confronts the reader with the apparent hopelessness felt by the returning German soldier faced with utter destruction.

A part of Borchert's _Heimkehrer_ experience was an intense questioning of what kind of a God would allow suffering. Certainly it could not have been the God of Christian theology. In Borchert's mind, the post-war devastation had proven that such a God could not exist. Thus the problem for Borchert became the age old question:

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[3] Borchert, _Das Gesamtwerk_ 59.

[4] Borchert, _Das Gesamtwerk_ 99-165.

[5] Borchert, _Das Gesamtwerk_ 244-64.

[6] Borchert, _Das Gesamtwerk_ 201-4.

what is the true nature of God, if it is not that which has been accepted by theologians. Borchert, however, could not envision a world without God.

It is through his various Heimkehrer characters that Borchert begins to search for a new God. His search for a more realistic concept of God resembles his own theodicy, which includes some kind of waiting for an answer from God. Borchert's questioning of the old God is perhaps best summed up in the final lines of his play Draußen vor der Tür, where Beckmann cries out: "Wo ist denn der alte Mann, der sich Gott nennt? Warum redet er denn nicht!!"[7]

The Heimkehrer figure is used to develop the God-concept, which is a topic that accompanies Borchert throughout his writing career. However, his concept of God has not yet been closely studied, in spite of its obvious importance. References to Borchert's God-concept are usually made briefly in articles concerning particular aspects of his work. The lack of a systematic investigation of Borchert's concept of God constitutes a major shortcoming, which leads to a misunderstanding of important aspects of Borchert's works.

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[7] Borchert, Das Gesamtwerk 165.

A. Literature Review

It was Peter Rühmkorf, in his 1961 biography, who set the tone for most of the subsequent references to Borchert's concept of God, when he called Borchert a "Gottesleugner"[8] and "Nihilist."[9] I shall argue that this is a misinterpretation caused by the restriction of the notion of God to the conventional image; Borchert did not reject all concepts of God. Borchert, while denying the "Märchenbuchliebergott",[10] which he attributed to the theologians and church, did not deny the existence of a higher being. Evidence for his belief in a being that may be termed "God" is seen in that Borchert allows his characters, most notably Beckmann, the central character of Draußen vor der Tür, to enter into a dialogue with God. If Borchert did not believe that God could exist, then why would his characters call out to Him as Beckmann does?

Hans Popper, in 1964, wrote an excellent overview of Borchert's life and works.[11] In the article he outlines the various artistic influences that may have played an important role in shaping Borchert as a writer.[12] Popper believes Borchert to be an atheist. Nevertheless, Popper comments in detail on Borchert's God-concept and concludes only that for Borchert "God is hidden."[13] Popper thus must confront the difficulty of discussing an entity which, though appearing in Borchert's works, Popper suggests Borchert did not believe in. My thesis is meant to resolve this widespread contradiction by arguing that Borchert rejected only the naive conventional image of God. All the occurrences of various God-figures in Borchert's works indicate that he was actively searching for a more acceptable concept of God.

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[8] Peter Rühmkorf, Wolfgang Borchert: In Selbstzuegnis und Bilddokumenten, Rowohlts Monographien 58 (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 1961) 157.

[9] Rühmkorf 158.

[10] Borchert, Das Gesamtwerk 149.

[11] Hans Popper, "Wolfgang Borchert" German Men of Letters, vol. 3, ed. Alex Natan (London: Oswald Wolf Limited, 1964) 269-303.

Another of the important interpretations of Borchert's works is to be found in Claus Schröder's 1985 biography on Borchert. In this biography Rühmkorf's view of Borchert as a Gottesleugner and Nihilist is softened. Schröder says that Borchert had decided to take God seriously and to search stubbornly for a loving God.[14] Schröder thus characterizes Borchert as someone in search of God, but does not use the available evidence to support this correct judgement.

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[12] Popper 269.

[13] Popper 294.

[14] Claus B. Schröder, Wolfgang Borchert (Hamburg: Ernst Kabel Verlag, 1985) 40.

Most of the other interpretations of Borchert's works include some mention of the God figures, but only to the extent that they acknowledge the appearance of God in the work, usually from the orthodox religious point of view. One of two arguments is commonly made: either that Borchert denied God's existence, or that his God fits an accepted Christian concept.

One of the interpreters who enters into a brief discussion about Borchert's concept of God is Karl Migner.[15] Migner, in his interpretation of Draußen vor der Tür, takes the position that Borchert replaces the old God with a new one which is death.[16] Migner goes on to say that Borchert placed the Heimkehrer Beckmann on the same level as the old God, that is locked outside of the door to society, with little or no hope of gaining readmittance. Migner believes that Borchert is a nihilist as described by Rühmkorf, and does not allow for the possibility of an unorthodox concept of God.

Helmut Christmann, on the other hand, in his interpretation of "Nachts schlafen die Ratten doch," concludes that Borchert portrays God as offering hope to post-war Germany.[17] Christmann believes that the old man in the story helps the young boy, back onto the path to living again, in the same way that Beckmann begins his journey. The old man relieves the boy of the burden of protecting his brother's dead body from the rats.

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[15] Karl Migner, "Das Drama Draußen vor der Tür." Interpretationen zu Wolfgang Borchert. Eds. Rupert Hirschenauer and Albrecht Weber. 2nd ed. (Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1964) 7-121.

[16] Migner 10.

Albrecht Weber, in his interpretation of "Die drei dunklen Könige" also views the story from a traditional religious perspective.[18] The story tells of three men, crippled in the war, who visit the home of a young couple with a newborn son. Weber sees a replaying of the first Christmas in the surroundings of post-war Germany. Here a new consciousness of the birth of the Saviour is represented by the birth of a child. Faith once more brings man into a right relationship with God.

A differing interpretation of Borchert's God-concept may be found in Robert Pichl's essay "Das Bild des Kindes in Wolfgang Borchert's Prosa."[19] Pichl appears to go against the general view when he maintains that it was

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[17] Helmut Christmann, "'Nachts schlafen die Ratten doch'", Interpretationen zu Wolfgang Borchert, eds. Rupert Hirschenauer and Albrecht Weber (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1962) 76-82.

[18] Albrecht Weber, "'Die drei dunklen Könige,'" Interpretationen zu Wolfgang Borchert, eds. Rupert Hirschenauer and Albrecht Weber (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1962) 97-108.

[19] Robert Pichl, "Das Bild des Kindes in Wolfgang Borcherts Prosa." Wolfgang Borchert: Werk und Wirkung. ed. Rudolf Wolff, Sammlung Profile 9 (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag Herbert Grundmann, 1984) 114-21.

Borchert's position that God, who is conceived along conventional lines, ought to be accepted with childlike faith.[20] This position should be viewed with some suspicion. What Borchert says about the so called lieber Gott, who is usually equated with the God of childhood, is that He is not consistent with the reality of evil.[21]

An interesting development in Borchert scholarship is the emergence of studies in the United States during the late 1960's and early 1970's. An acceptable English translation of Borchert's works has been available since 1952.[22] This new found curiosity in the works of Borchert has brought new perspectives challenging the ideas originating in Germany. The new works focus more on specific aspects of Borchert's works, such as his God-concept. In part at least, one might speculate, the new activity in the United States stems from the fact that the Americans had to come to grips with their own generation of Heimkehrer from the war in Vietnam.[23]

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[20] Robert Pichl 121.

[21] Borchert makes this point in a letter to Max Grantz in February of 1947. (Kraske 53)

[22] Wolfgang Borchert, The Man Outside: The Prose Works of Wolfgang Borchert, trans. David Porter (Norfolk: New Directions, 1952.)

[23] James L. Stark, "Wolfgang Borchert and the Third Reich," Ph.D. Thesis, University of Washington, 1972, 2.

One of the first major American studies that dealt with Borchert's works was Evelyn Albinson's thesis "Georg Büchner and Wolfgang Borchert: A Comparative Study." Although she does not state explicitly that she holds to the convention of viewing Borchert as a Gottesleugner and Nihilist, she does so implicitly through her perception of Borchert as a continuation of Büchner. Similarly, Albinson views Borchert's works as a further progression of Büchner's famous nihilistic notion that God no longer played a part in the direction of the universe, and that He was becoming evermore estranged from the consciousness of man. Albinson further states, ". . . [that] German tragedy tends to postulate a fatalistic pessimism and utter futility of life."[24] The view that Borchert is a continuation of a long standing German tendency towards godlessness and nihilism, however, does not seem to account for Borchert's whole range of belief, seen in the light of the short stories "Die drei dunklen Könige" and "Nachts schlafen die Ratten doch" which end on a hopeful note pregnant with Christian symbolism.

The next significant American study which deals with Borchert's works--and more than touches on his concept of God--is Sidney Krome's critical introduction to his dissertation "A Translation of Die traurigen Geranien und andere Geschichten aus dem Nachlaß by Wolfgang Borchert." Although Krome's work is primarily a translation of works collected after Borchert's death, he includes a lengthy introduction--105 pages--which gives an overview and interpretation of all of Borchert's published works. In this work, one finds the beginnings of a break from the traditional view of Borchert the nihilist; it is the first to identify God as the principal concern of Borchert's works.[25] However, even though Krome wishes to indicate that Borchert was not a nihilist, he asserts that Borchert did not believe God existed, or at best that God did not care to get involved in human affairs.[26] Krome further points out that Borchert accused God of allowing evil to exist, thus implying that Borchert's concept of God was one of a malevolent manipulator of mankind. Krome, however, commits a grievous error in interpreting Borchert's play Draußen vor der Tür when he makes a one-sided analysis of the dialogue between Beckmann and God. It cannot be ignored that Borchert wrote the words not only for Beckmann but for the figure of God as well, and that for any one of the accusations Beckmann throws at God, God has an answer, and eventually even Beckmann comes to the realization that it is not God, but man, that allows evil to take place. Any valid interpretation of Borchert must be prepared to depart from the traditional Judeo-Christian concept of God, which places too much emphasis on the benevolent divine intervention of God, and takes too much responsibility away from mankind.

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[24] Evelyn Albinson, "Georg Büchner and Wolfgang Borchert: A Comparative Study," Ph.D. Thesis, University of Minnesota, 1967, 11.

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[25] Sydney A. Krome, "A Translation of Die traurigen Geranien und andere Geschichten aus dem Nachlaß by Wolfgang Borchert, with a Critical Introduction," Ph.D. Thesis, University of Maryland, 1970, 15.

[26] Krome 16-17.

James Stark was the next American scholar to delve into the works of Borchert.[27] In concentrating on the social environment from which Borchert's works emerged, he does little in the way of interpreting Borchert's works, or explaining how the Nazi climate of Germany affected Borchert's concept of God. Stark, however, does make an attempt at defining Borchert's God-concept when he deals with the short story "Die Hundeblume." Stark reaches the following conclusion: Borchert's God is to be found within the life which surrounds and permeates the individual. If this is the case, then Stark maintains that Borchert also redefines God, ". . . the prisoner redefines God . . . . God is a life force to the prisoner, but a life force under the control of that which is living."[28] In coming to this conclusion Stark suggests that the God-concept found in Borchert's works is an expression of man's own highest aspirations. One is also left to ponder the question of whether such a being, as characterised by Stark, can properly be identified as God, because the traditional definition of God encompasses a being who is under no control other than its own.

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[27] James Stark, "Wolfgang Borchert and the Third Reich," University of Washington, Ph.D. Thesis, 1972.

An example of the lengths to which scholars have gone to stress Borchert's "anti-theism"[29] may be seen in Louise Woodard's dissertation "Beckmann: The Existential Outsider in Wolfgang Borchert's Draußen vor der Tür."[30] In what appears to be a promising effort to gain an understanding of Borchert's Beckmann, Woodard nevertheless makes statements that place her conclusions in question:

> Wolfgang received no formal Christian education. Instead, he readily adopted his father's openly declared lack of faith. The stance on religion shows up later in Borchert's writings not so much as a condemnation of the corrupt institutions of religious belief as in the image of the Godhead itself. Gott in Draußen vor der Tür is, for example, a pitifully weak, lachrymose old man.[31]

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[28] Stark 62. This view is supported by the letter written by Borchert to Max Grantz. See page 9.

[29] Albinson 40. "Anti-theistic" is a term used by Evelyn Albinson to differentiate Borchert's position from that of "A-theistic".

[30] Louise P. Woodard, "Beckmann: The Existential Outsider in Wolfgang Borchert's Draußen vor der Tür," M.A. Thesis, University of Vermont, 1972.

[31] Woodard 2.

First there is a large problem with the assumption that Borchert received no formal religious training, for his final report card from the Oberrealschule indicates a mark of 3 in religion (on a scale of 1 to 6, 1 being the best mark).[32] A second difficulty found in Woodard's thesis is the implication that Borchert did not condemn the corrupt institutions of religious belief.[33] Although, admittedly, Borchert does not attack the church directly, he does do so indirectly, when he accuses God, in Draußen vor der Tür, of having too much Theologentinte in his veins. This at least indicates that he believed the religious community to be somewhat misguided.[34] In addition to his attack on the theologians, Borchert censures the church estabishment when Beckmann says to God, ". . . sie haben dich in den Kirchen eingemauert . . . ."[35] Here Borchert speaks of the responsibility of those who represent the authority of the Church, and not the guilt of God, because the Church has erected barriers that keep the common man from meeting God face to face on his own terms. Beckmann completes his invective against the pastors and priests when he tells God:

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[32] Schröder, (1985) 75-76.

[33] Woodard ought to have given credit where credit is due in this case, because it appears that she is using an almost direct translation of what Rühmkorf had already said in his Borchert biography. Compare with Rühmkorf 14.

[34] Borchert, Das Gesamtwerk 149.

[35] Borchert, Das Gesamtwerk 149. My emphasis on "sie."

> Geh, aber sieh zu, daß du vor Anbruch der restlosen Finsternis irgendwo ein Loch oder einen neuen Anzug findest oder einen dunklen Wald, sonst schieben sie dir nachher alles in die Schuhe, wenn es schief gegangen ist.[36]

One can see in these few lines that Borchert did not confine himself to criticism of God, but also directed rebuke towards those who declared themselves to be the representatives of God.

One of the most recent works on Borchert is Kurt Fickert's Signs and Portents: Myth in the Works of Wolfgang Borchert.[37] Fickert attempts to come to an understanding of Borchert's works by applying Jungian archetypes to the various characters who appear in Borchert's works. To this end, Fickert has identified the "old man" characters of Borchert's works as symbols for God. Although this may be helpful when endeavouring to identify the various passages in which a God-figure appears in Borchert's works, it also stresses the feebleness of God, in that He is again viewed as old and broken-down. Fickert makes a limited attempt at interpreting what Borchert was striving to accomplish by inserting a God-figure into his stories and play. Fickert restricts himself to an enumeration of the various occasions Borchert uses a God-figure, and then speculates briefly on their possible significance to the work being analyzed.

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[36] Borchert, Das Gesamtwerk 149-50.

[37] Kurt Fickert, Signs and Portents: Myth in the Works of Wolfgang Borchert (Fredricton N.B.: York Press, 1980).

As can be seen from this brief sampling of interpretations of Borchert's works, there is no consensus on Borchert's concept of God, except that the importance of Borchert's God-concept is underestimated to a great extent. Furthermore, the various interpreters tend to concentrate on only one of Borchert's works, and thus fall victim to the contradictions found in Borchert's works.

B. Borchert the God Searcher

The question now arises: why is Borchert's concept of God central to his works as a whole? Aside from it being one of his major motifs, Borchert's concept of God is important for another reason: his fascination with the Bible during the time in which the bulk of his writing was done. Evidence of Borchert's interest in the Bible during this period may be found in a letter dated the 27th of January 1946 to Dr. Hager, a friend of the Borchert family, who represented Wolfgang in his trials during the war. Herein Borchert states, "Sonst geschieht hier nichts, außer daß ich in der Bibel lese."[38] Apart from Borchert's own testimony in this matter, Helmut Gumtau, in his abbreviated biography on Borchert, reports of Borchert's attachment to the Bible, and that the last Bible passage that he read a few days before his death, was that of creation.[39] Undoubtedly the Bible was an important factor in his life.

Borchert can be seen as a searcher for the truth about God. He was no longer satisfied with the traditional concept of God, which, in his view, was shattered by the realities of post-World War II Germany. Borchert's renunciation of this God concept--as already mentioned--may be found in the play Draußen vor der Tür, where Beckmann rejects the old and feeble God whose impotence cannot prevent evil from occurring.[40] A partial answer to why Borchert chose to portray God as weak and impotent may be found in the second part of Borchert's motto for Draußen vor der Tür which appears on the original manuscript of the play, but was dropped (for ideological and/or political reasons?) in the published versions which appeared after his death. It reads:

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[38] Schröder, (1985) 254.

[39] Helmut Gumtau, Wolfgang Borchert, Köpfe des XX. Jahrhunderts vol. 55 (Berlin: Colloquium Verlag Otto H. Hess, 1969) 89.

[40] Borchert, Das Gesamtwerk 148.

Ein Stück,
das kein Theater spielen
und kein Publikum sehen will.
Eine Injektion Nihilimus
bewirkt oft,
daß man aus lauter Angst
wieder Mut zum Leben bekommt.[41]

The second part of Borchert's motto, which can be understood as an explanation for his apparent nihilistic stance, is rarely considered in interpretations of Borchert's nihilism, and never considered in relation to his concept of God.

As one analyzes the various influences on Borchert's God-concept, and what Borchert himself says about God, one begins to see that a reevaluation of his works may be inevitable. It will become apparent that Borchert can no longer be seen as a nihilist who denies God's existence.

To solve these problems it is also necessary to look into the various influences that played a part in the conceptualization of Borchert's ideas about God. As already mentioned the Bible is an important factor. Borchert employed many motifs in his short stories that are taken directly from the Bible, with the Christ figure being the most apparent.[42] If these circumstances are not considered, then one is led to only a shallow understanding of Borchert's concept of God, from an orthodox religious perspective. Borchert's concept of God, however, ought to be approached from a non-orthodox perspective, a perspective that sees the individual freed from the teaching of a Church, which claims to be God's authority on earth. Borchert wishes to see the individual able to enter into dialogue with God directly. In part, his individualistic approach to God has its origin in the fact that his father wished to raise his son independent of the influence of the organized Church, although Borchert was not discouraged from contemplating God on his own.[43]

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[41] Claus B. Schröder, "Mit dem nüchternen Blick auf Leidenschaften: Dieser Name mit seinem eigenartigen Klang," Wolfgang Borchert: Werk und Wirkung, ed. Rudolf Wolff, Sammlung Profile 9 (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag Herbert Grundmann, 1984) 80.

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[42] At this point one could begin to build a comprehensive list of the various biblical allusions that Borchert makes in his works, however, this will be taken up later.

[43] Gumtau 13.

C. Borchert's Influences

The two most important influences on Borchert's concept of God, which as yet have not been explored by other scholars, are the writings of Barlach and Nietzsche. Borchert himself considered these two thinkers to be the most meaningful for him, and recorded numerous quotations from both Nietzsche and Barlach. These are to be found in his letters dating from 1940 to his death, clearly indicating that he had more than a passing interest in both writers.[44] As well, Hans Popper indicates that there is in existence a copy of Nietzsche's _Also sprach Zarathustra_ published by Alfred Kröner Verlag in 1918, complete with Borchert's own marginalia.[45] The Wolfgang Borchert Archives in Hamburg have three copies of Nietzsche's works which were owned by Borchert, in which _Also sprach Zarathustra_ is included; however, the archive's copies contain no evidence of Borchert having made notes in them.[46] In a letter to the author, dated the 10th of July 1990, Popper states that he had borrowed the edition in question from Rühmkorf. Popper further states in the letter that the notes consisted largely of exclamation marks and vertical lines, however on occassion Borchert would include a brief comment, such as Gott beside a passage in which Nietzsche deals with God.[47] Thus an investigation of Borchert's concept of God would be incomplete, without a comparison to the writings of Nietzsche and Borchert. As for the reasons why the writings of Nietzsche and Barlach have been so neglected in association with Borchert, one can only speculate.[48] It is unfortunate that Barlach has been overlooked, because Borchert himself thought highly of Barlach. The neglect of Nietzsche, however, is even more perplexing, because of his unquestioned significance, in literary, theological and philosophical thought. One can only speculate that this is because Nietzsche has to some extent been considered a taboo subject, due to the misinterpretation of his writings by the Nazis.

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[44] Rühmkorf 27. In the detail of the numerous quotations which Borchert apparently used in his personal letters, one must rely on the scholarship of Rühmkorf, due to there being no collection of Borchert's letters published up to this point in time. Although Borchert also includes Rilke as a third important influence, he appears to break with his early fascination with Rilke in 1942. However, Borchert continued to invoke Nietzsche and Barlach after 1945, and even visited a showing of Barlach's work in 1946 on a fever free day. (Rühmkorf, 124.)

[45] Hans Popper, letter to the author, 10 July 1990.

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[46] Irmgard Schidler (current Borchert archivist), letter to the author, 12 July 1990.

[47] Also, Popper, note 59, 298.

[48] The neglect is not complete. Helmut Gumtau 53, and Edson Chick, Ernst Barlach, Twayne's World Author Series 26 (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1967) 108, each devote one sentence to comparisons.

Finally, the following methodological point should be mentioned. While one could frame these questions of "influence" in the modern critical terminology of "intertext" and "intertextuality," i.e., as an interplay of repressed or seemingly absent "voices" in Borchert's works, the present study relies on a more traditional critical metaphor. Rather than exploring connections in relation to the "general text,"[49] I simply assume that Borchert, Nietzsche and Barlach, in exploring similar problems, drew similar motifs from a common cultural continuum.

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[49] Jacques Derrida, De la Grammatologie (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1967) 227. ("il n'y a pas de hors-text").

II. The Origins of the Concept of God in Borchert's Works

A. The Prevailing Attitude in Germany (1918-1945)

Without question, the churches of Germany--both Protestant and to a lesser extent the Roman Catholic--went through an upheaval after the First World War. The tumult was then further compounded by the National Socialists' rise to power in 1933. Superficially it might appear that this would have little impact on Borchert's concept of God; however, in that it contributed to the shaping of German attitudes toward God, it is significant for a reader attempting to wrestle with Borchert's treatment of the God figure. In this brief survey of the prevailing religious attitudes in Germany, the focus will necessarily fall on the Protestant church, not only because it dominated the northern part of Germany from which Borchert came, but was the confession in which the Borchert family had its roots.

Protestantism during the Nazi era in Germany was badly split by its own in-fighting, thus not presenting a common front as Catholicism did to the Nazis in defence of its faith.[50] The lack of a common front led to the

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[50] Micheal Power, Religion in the Reich (London: Longmans, Green and Co, 1939) 99-100.

Protestants being more easily manipulated by the government of the time. It had not as yet been ascertained to exactly what degree the National Socialists were opposed to the church itself,[51] or whether the Protestant Church was able to retain its position of relative influence within the German State.[52] In time, however, the National Socialists appeared to learn how to manipulate the Protestant church, and thus how its perception of the nature of God might be used for the benefit of various National Socialist policies.

Part of the changing comprehension of God, was His "Germanization," that is to say that God became identified with the German nation itself. God, as presented in the Bible, was thrust aside for one who was ideologically sound. The pastors of the German Christian Movement--which effectively took control of German Protestantism in 1933--believed that the Gospels had to speak to the German soul, they even went so far as to deny the God of the Old Testament, due to his jewishness.[53] The exclusion of the

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[51] Power 99.

[52] Ernst Helmreich, The Churches under Hitler: Background,Struggle and Epilogue" (Wayne State University Press, Detroit, 1979) 148. In the beginning the National Socialists appeared to remain aloof from any support from the German churches. (Stark 41) Stark also emphasizes the apparent confusion which existed in the relationship between Church and State in pre-war Germany.

[53] Power 115.

Old Testament would also have left a more malleable, seemingly anti-semitic New Testament God, who could be shaped into the form they desired.

A further symptom of German Protestant tendency to reject the Old Testament can be seen in the manner in which God is personified. In the Old Testament God is still portrayed as being super-human, however, in the New Testament there is an inclination towards a God who is meek, as has been interpreted from Jesus' reported behaviour. Borchert appears to have taken this characterization of God to its logical conclusion. However, the conclusion which Borchert reached in this regard, ought not be taken as his personal view of God, but his interpretation of what man had done to the perception of God, because Borchert's concept of God is multifaceted rather than one dimensional.

Having softened the concept of God in German Protestantism, the "German Christians" set about the work of reformulating God's definition in light of the new forces at work in Germany. It was not long before they began to incorporate Nazi propaganda, such as the "Blut und Boden" slogan, and preach God from a National Socialist perspective.[54] In the process, God's definition as the highest ideal of man became perverted, because the highest ideal had become Germany itself, thus completely identifying God with the German state.

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[54] Power 103.

Borchert, in Draußen vor der Tür, played with the notion of a God that was so closely identified with Germany, when he presented God as a pitiful wreck, who would not accept the blame for his own misfortune, and was consumed with self-pity. God was in the same state as Germany found itself after the Second World War, a social outcast on whom the world had turned its back. Borchert also takes to its logical conclusion the parallel degradation of God and State, when he has God run about the stage looking for sympathy, just as German people appeared to look for pity after the war.

One of the developments in German religious life between the wars--in the Protestant north at least--was the apparent isolation of God from the common man, effectively removing God as a driving force behind social change. This development allowed for greater governmental control of religious institutions. Micheal Power paraphrases Mario Bendiscioli's assessment of the Protestant church in pre-World War II Germany when he writes,

> The gospel of direct inspiration and its corollary "free interpretation", and even more, the underestimation of the social and ecclesiastical element in religious life combined with an aggressive German individualism, had estranged the Evangelicals more and more from their church and

> had caused even the faithful to it to regard it more as a social institution for the defence of morality and order than the mystic body of Christ.[55]

While it may appear that this development might make God more approachable, the church as a defender of morality led it to move in lock-step with the National Socialists who purported to uphold the same morality, thus allowing the goals of the National Socialists and God to be seen as one and the same.[56] Borchert, although he was not a communicant in the Protestant Church, appears to have been deeply affected by its actions, because he has Beckmann comment on God having locked himself in the church so that He has no contact with the world outside.[57]

Borchert in his works might have been reacting to a concept of God which is not based on the Bible, but rather one who is based on National Socialist ideology, a God that is adjusted to conform to what the people wanted to hear rather than a God who requires their conforming to

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[55] Power 101. Although it appears that Power is quoting Bendiscioli directly, Power is actually giving an accurate summation of Bendicioli's position in regard to Protestant Germany.

[56] The precise nature of the relationship between Church and State in Germany, and how it affected the beliefs of the members of the Church, is difficult to determine. Most people who were involved with church activities at that time appear reluctant to discuss the subject.

[57] Borchert, Das Gesamtwerk 149. Borchert later changes the "dich" to a "sie", indicating the theologians have locked God in the churches.

His standards. It is the God which conformed to ideology that Borchert disavows, and not the self-defining God as presented in the Old Testament.[58]

B. Religion in Borchert's Home

There appears to be agreement among scholars on the point that Fritz Borchert, Wolfgang's father, influenced Wolfgang Borchert's religious leanings. However, there appears to be disagreement on the circumstances that surround the direction that Fritz Borchert's sway took. For instance, Gumtau reports that due to the aufgeklärte Haltung of Fritz Borchert, Wolfgang remained konfessionlos.[59] Schröder, however, makes note of Wolfgang's baptism --an item which appears to have been ignored or overlooked by all other scholars.[60] These two differing accounts of Borchert's early religious life are not difficult to reconcile; it could simply be a matter of the biographers reporting on different times in Wolfgang Borchert's life. It is likely that Wolfgang may well have been baptized, but that the baptism was not confirmed later in his life--an event that would probably have taken place around the years 1932-34. Considering the turmoil that the German Protestant church found itself in at that time, it is conceivable that Wolfgang Borchert's not being confirmed into the church was intended to be a political, rather than religious, statement on the part of his parents. It is thus possible that the Borchert family's rejection of the church took place some time after Wolfgang's birth, tying the rejection of the church to the new doctrines being put forward in the National Socialist controlled Protestant church. From this evidence it is possible to conclude that Fritz Borchert rejected God as he was being preached in the churches, but not necessarily the idea of God's existence. If it is indeed true that Fritz Borchert influenced his son's religious inclinations as reported by Rühmkorf,[61] then Wolfgang might also have rejected this new God of Germany, but not the biblical or philosophical concept of God.

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[58] Exodus 3:14a. "God answered, 'I am that I am.'" The Revised English Bible.

[59] Gumtau 13.

[60] Schröder, (1985) 40.

Many commentators appear to have over emphasized the Borchert family's irregular church attendance. From this they conclude Fritz Borchert, and thus Wolfgang, was an atheist, equating simple non-attendance with a rejection of God. This, however, is not logical, because not attending church simply indicates that they were not different from a great number of the 40 million German

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[61] Rühmkorf 14.

Protestants who chose to remain at home on Sunday morning.[62] There is even evidence that Fritz Borchert was active in the church at one point in his life. Gumtau refers to a letter Fritz Borchert wrote to the writer Karl Würzburg five months after the death of Wolfgang. He indicates that he led the congregational singing on those Sundays when his father-in-law, Carl Salchow, read the sermon.[63] Alternately, Fritz Borchert has been called agnostic, but even this is perhaps too strong a statement.[64] It may be better to conclude, in agreement with Gumtau, that the Borcherts were unconventional in their approach to religious practice after 1933.[65]

Another view expressed by some commentators is that Fritz Borchert evinced an "aufgeklärte Haltung" in regard to matters pertaining to religion.[66] However, the term aufgeklärte Haltung is too broad to exclude all and every belief in a supreme being. Indeed, Gumtau offers a non-atheistic, non-agnostic interpretation when he suggests what Fritz Borchert may have understood as "aufgeklärt": ". . . er [Fritz Borchert] und seine Frau wollten Religion tiefer verstehen, als sie ihnen in den Kirchen ihrer Zeit begegneten."[67] It is safe to conclude from the textual evidence found in Wolfgang Borchert's works, if his attiude towards God was influenced by his father, that Gumtau is most probably correct in the assertion that Fritz Borchert did not simply reject God; but, that he felt alienated by God as He was presented in church. This element may then be tied in with the general attitude of the religious community in Germany. It is likely that the Borcherts, and thus Wolfgang himself, were reacting to the God being dictated to them by the emerging leadership of the German Christian Movement. These events would then have led the Borcherts, and thus their son as well, to look for a God-concept independent of the teachings of the church. This being the case, those interpretations of Borchert's God-concept which are based on the traditional Christian concept of God should be considered insufficient.

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[62] Power 100. Power estimates the number of Protestant communicants at 40,000,000.

[63] Gumtau 13.

[64] Rühmkorf 14. "aufgeklärte Glaubenslosigkeit." This appears to contradict his later conclusion that Borchert was a "Gottesleugner" and "Nihilist". (Rühmkorf 158-59).

[65] Gumtau 13.

[66] Gumtau 13.

Wolfgang Borchert was confronted by two opposing views of God: God as He was interpreted by the German Christian

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[67] Gumtau 13. Gumtau regrettably does not give the source from which he has garnered this information, or whether he has inferred this conclusion from research into the religious activities of Fritz and Hertha Borchert.

Movement, and the God he intuitively searched for within himself. This dichotomy manifests itself in his works, and has led to a great deal of confusion, not only about whether Borchert believed in a God, but what his concept of God was. On the one hand, he appears to reject God, on the other to embrace Him. Unfortunately too much emphasis has been placed on the God that Borchert rejected (that is, the God figure in Draußen vor der Tür and the short story "Die Kegelbahn"[68]) and not enough on the one he embraced (God as represented in works such as "Nachts schlafen die Ratten doch,"[69] "Die drei dunkeln Könige"[70] and the poem "Kinderlied."[71]) Upon comparing the two seemingly contradictory Gods, it becomes transparent that Borchert actually presents the reader with two distinct accounts of God, one being a mirror image of God as interpreted by the theologians taken to its logical conclusion, and the other being God as Borchert experienced Him.

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[68] Borchert, Das Gesamtwerk 169-170.

[69] Borchert, Das Gesamtwerk 216-19.

[70] Borchert, Das Gesamtwerk 185-87.

[71] Borchert, Das Gesamtwerk 267.

C. Echoes of Nietzsche in Borchert's God-Concept

As asserted in the previous chapter, Nietzsche's philosophy was highly regarded by Borchert.[72] It is thus possible to presume that Nietzsche's concept of God would have been echoed by Borchert in some way. This, however, is not to say that Borchert accepted everything that Nietzsche had to say on God, but rather, Borchert would have adopted those thoughts which struck a positive chord with him, and reacted by blocking out those thoughts he may have disagreed with--as is the case with Nietzsche's infamous assertion that "God is dead."[73] In respect to Borchert's God-concept, all of Nietzsche's works should be considered, but special emphasis will be placed on Nietzsche's Also sprach Zarathustra, because it has been identified as a work that Borchert definitely read and made some commentary on.[74]

Nietzsche and Borchert have similar styles of writing in that both "philosophized with a hammer,"[75] that is they both set out to smash the graven images created by man--Nietzsche through his philosophical writings and Borchert through his literary achievements. Neither of the two had time for grandiloquence, and the reader is often taken aback by the brute force of their words. This may be seen in the rapier like thrusts of Nietzsche's aphorisms, and is apparent in Borchert's uncomplicated sentence structure which drive his point home without the frills of excess stylistic or ostentatious adjectives and dependent clauses. Borchert, in "Das ist unser Manifest" clarifies what his approach to writing is when he announces,

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[72] Rühmkorf 27.

[73] Friedrich Nietzsche, Also sprach Zarathustra, ed. Karl Schlechta, Friedrich Nietzsche: Werke in drei Bände vol. 2 (Munich: Karl Hanser Verlag, 1955) 525.

[74] Popper 269.

[75] Friedrich Nietzsche, Götzen-Dämmerung, oder, Wie man mit dem Hammer philosophiert, ed. Karl Schlechta, Friedrich Nietzsche: Werke in drei Bände vol. 2 (Munich: Karl Hanser Verlag, 1955) 939.

> Wir brauchen keine Stilleben mehr. Unser Leben ist laut.
>
> Wir brauchen keine Dichter mit guter Grammatik. Zu guter Grammatik fehlt uns Geduld. Wir brauchen die mit dem heißen heiser geschluchzten Gefühl. Die zu Baum Baum und zu Weib Weib sagen und ja sagen und nein sagen: laut und deutlich und dreifach und ohne Konjunktiv.[76]

This passage outlines the principles Borchert may have used in developing his concept of God. God would thus have been stripped down to His barest meaning; that is, Borchert would have endeavoured to distill God into His simplest form. In part this would explain why Borchert would have presented God in such a grotesque manner in his earlier works. In an attempt to find God in His purest form, Borchert finds it necessary to reveal those attributes of God as the highest ideal of human thought, which are incompatible with God the supreme being.

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[76] Borchert, Das Gesamtwerk 310.

In considering the question of Borchert's mirroring, or rejecting, of some of the notions that surround Nietzsche's concept of God, it is necessary to sketch out Nietzsche's position in regard to God.

In numerous passages Nietzsche claims that God is dead, but in almost the same breath he will refer to the shadow of God, who still exists, or allude to a God who is in the process of coming.[77] Reinhard Margreiter in his introduction to Ontologie und Gottesbegriffe bei Nietzsche has attempted to make some sense out of these apparent contradictions.[78] In it he states that Nietzsche may have been using the term Gott and Götter as a metaphor, rather than the mythological\religious figure to which most are accustomed.[79] Margreiter even goes so far as to say that Nietzsche may have been referring to something completely different when he wrote Gott.[80] To some extent Margreiter's explanation of Nietzsche's use of the term Gott is helpful in an investigation of Borchert's concept of God. It highlights the fact that the term God need not necessarily refer to that which is considered to be the highest being, but that it may be used as a metaphor representing something else. For example, Nietzsche has Zarathustra say "Gott ist ein Gedanke . . . ." indicating that the concept "God" is a human invention.[81] It is at this point that Nietzsche's and Borchert's concept of God make first contact, because Borchert attacks the human manufacture of God: "Hat auch Gott Theologie studiert?"[82] However, Borchert does not overtly contest the view that a higher being exists, as Nietzsche may have done. It becomes clear that it is the God of human invention that is coming under fire from Borchert. Thus it is imperative that the God which both Nietzsche and Borchert are denying be seen as the God that was created by the theologians and religion, that is, man's highest thought, rather than the highest being. In fact, Wilhelm Weischedel goes so far as to say, that Nietzsche was actually talking about the death of religion, and not the death of God, in which case man could then find his way back to God unencumbered by religion.[83]

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[77] Friedrich Nietzsche, Die fröhliche Wissenschaft, Friedrich Nietzsche: Werke in drei Bänden, vol. 2, ed. Karl Schlechta (Munich: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1955) 115.

[78] Reinhard Margreiter, Ontologie und Gottesbegriffe bei Nietzsche: Zur Frage einer "Neuentdeckung Gottes" im Spätwerk, Monographien zur philosophischen Forschung 160 (Meisenheim am Glan: Verlag Anton Hain, 1978) i-iv.

[79] Margreiter iii-iv.

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[80] Margreiter iv.

[81] Nietzsche, Also sprach Zarathustra, Werke vol. 2 344. Nietzsche echoes this same sentiment in various other passages as well.

[82] Borchert, Das Gesamtwerk 148.

The next parallel that will be addressed is that of more than one God being depicted in the works of Nietzsche and Borchert. We may accept Margreiter's view that Nietzsche was dealing with more than one concept of God. But is this also the case in Borchert's works? This question may be answered by examining the apparent contradictions in Nietzsche and Borchert concerning God.

As already stated, Nietzsche appeared to contradict himself in his position towards the existence of God. Although God was dead, he continued to exist as a shadow.[84] The same contradiction finds its way into the works of Borchert. However, Borchert not only contradicts himself in sometimes denying and sometimes affirming the existence of God, but in the inconsistency of the God he presents. This contradiction may be seen when one compares the God of Draußen vor der Tür with that of "Nachts schlafen die Ratten doch" or "Die drei dunkeln Könige"; this will be discussed later in greater detail.

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[83] Wilhelm Weischedel, Der Gott der Philosophen: Grundlegung einer philosophischen Theologie im Zeitalter des Nihilismus, vol. 1 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1975) 457.

[84] Nietzsche, Die fröhliche Wissenschaft, Werke vol. 2, 115.

The above comparison delineates a general similarity between Borchert's and Nietzsche's approach to God in the way that He is presented in their works. There are, however, direct parallels in their treatment of God which may be observed. The first of these correlations is that of Gott der Gefängniswärter. Nietzsche, in Menschliches, Allzumenschliches, relates a parable about prisoners who are about to begin their work in the prison yard when they realize that their guard is missing, and presume that he is dead.[85] As the prisoners begin to discuss where he might be, one of the prisoners claims that he is the son of the prison guard, and that if they believe in him they will be saved. Borchert also employs the figure of the prison guard in his short story "Ein Sonntagmorgen,"[86] where he gives the guard the stature of a god when he listens to the petitions of the prisoners in his cell block every Sunday morning. Although Nietzsche's Guard is dead and Borchert's is alive, the similarity between the two characters is striking. God, the prison guard, is in a position of power over men, with ability to grant their petitions.[87]

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[85] Friedrich Nietzsche, Menschliches, Allzumenschliches: Ein Buch für freie Geister, Friedrich Nietzsche: Werke in drei Bänden vol. 1, ed. Karl Schlechta (Munich; Carl Hanser Verlag, 1954) 914-15 (#84)

[86] Wolfgang Borchert, Die traurigen Geranien und andere Geschichten aus dem Nachlaß (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1961) 84-94.

Borchert employs the figure of a guard again in a later short story, "Preußens Gloria."[88] However, in this second story the guard--God--becomes a tragic figure when he commits suicide. In "Preußens Gloria" a guard is put in charge of keeping watch over a warehouse. As he marches back and forth to the tempo of the music, thieves burglarize the warehouse. At the trial, the guard is accused and convicted of having either committed the crime, or at the very least complicity in the crime, while the actual criminals watch from the gallery. When the guard, having failed in his duty, and having been thoroughly discredited, takes his life, there is no mistaking that the blame for his death falls on the shoulders of man.

In "Preußens Gloria" one finds that Borchert amalgamates two different thoughts that Nietzsche deals with concerning God, the first being the already mentioned figure of God as a guard, the second being the death of God itself. On this second theme Nietzsche is quite clear, and he repeats himself on more than one occassion, when he says,

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[87] One could also draw a parallel between Borchert's prison guard and Kafka's Türhüter. Although it is likely that Borchert may have read Kafka, there does not appear to be any concrete evidence at this time to support his having read any of his works.

[88] Wolfgang Borchert, Die traurigen Geranien 77-83.

> Ist er [Gott] dann verlorengegangen? sagte der eine. Hat er sich verlaufen wie ein Kind? sagte der andere. Oder hält er sich versteckt? Fürchtet er sich vor uns? Ist er zu Schiff gegangen? ausgewandert? --so schrien und lachten sie durcheinander. Der tolle Mensch sprang mitten unter sie und durchbohrte sie mit seinen Blicken. "Wohin ist Gott?" rief er, ich will es euch sagen! Wir haben ihn getötet--ihr und ich! Wir alle sind seine Mörder![89]

Borchert borrows the idea that humanity is the murderer of God, but does so subtly when he writes at the end of "Preußens Gloria,"

> Er sah zwei grinsende Gesichter. Er sah einen Gerichtssaal, der bis an den Rand voll Menschen war. Und die beiden Gesichter grinsten. Und dann grinste der ganze Gerichtssaal. Preußens Gloria, sagte er leise, Preußens Gloria. Und die ganze Stadt ist dabei.[90]

Having come to the realization that he has become the scapegoat for the entire population of the city, the guard then returns home and commits suicide. In the above two passages one sees the correlation between Borchert and Nietzsche. Here Borchert echoes Nietzsche's conclusion that man is responsible for the death of God. Borchert's passage, however, makes one further point, which is related to the death of God, and this is where he once more goes a step further than Nietzsche. Whereas in Nietzsche, the reader is left to speculate to some extent about who is to blame for God's failure in fulfilling man's expectations, Borchert apportions the blame to man, because it is man who has created the conditions for God's failure. It is man who sets the parameters within which God must operate: just as the guard marches back and forth to the music, so God "marches to man's tune". Man knows where God's weaknesses lie, because man has created them, and thus can blame God for the crimes that he himself commits.

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[89] Nietzsche, Die fröhliche Wissenschaft, Werke vol. 2, 126-27. Nietzsche repeats this accusation when Zarathustra is accused of being the murderer of God in, Also sprach Zarathustra, Werke vol. 2, 502.

[90] Borchert, Die traurigen Geranien 82-83.

A second parallel, using the above passage from Die fröhliche Wissenschaft, may be seen when one compares it to Beckmann's tyrade against God in Draußen vor der Tür. In it, Beckmann vents his anger rather than his derision at God in the following manner:

> Oh, wir haben dich gesucht, Gott, in jeder Ruine, in jedem Granattrichter, in jeder Nacht. Wir haben dich gerufen. Gott! Wir haben nach dir gebrüllt, geweint, geflucht! Wo warst du da, lieber Gott? Wo bist du heute abend? Hast du dich von uns gewandt? Hast du dich ganz in deine schönen alten Kirchen eingemauert, Gott? Hörst du unser Geschrei nicht durch die zerklirrten Fenster, Gott? Wo bist du?[91]

Both Nietzsche and Borchert question whether God has abandoned man. However, neither Nietzsche nor Borchert appear to be satisfied with God having abandoned man, so they look for other explanations for His absence. For

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[91] Borchert, Das Gesamtwerk 149. In this passage one may also note that Borchert uses Beckmann as a Christ figure, in that he echoes the dispair of Christ on the cross.

Nietzsche it is a rather simple matter; God is dead and thus cannot answer man's call. Borchert, however, does not give in to such a simplistic rationalization of God's apparent disappearance. God in Draußen vor der Tür, points out that it is man who has turned his back on Him. He states:

> "Meine Kinder haben sich von mir gewandt, nicht ich von ihnen. Ihr von mir, ihr von mir. Ich bin der Gott, an den keiner mehr glaubt. Ihr habt euch von mir gewandt."[92]

God has been left "Draußen vor der Tür" as it were.

The death of God may be noted in other Borchert works, such as "Die Kegelbahn" and "Jesus macht nicht mehr mit." Although one might argue that this motif at the time was so wide spread that it could have been taken from almost anywhere, Borchert's familiarity with Nietzsche's works indicates it as the most likely source.[93] While Borchert only uses the death of God motif explicitly in the one story "Preußens Gloria," its echoes are strongly felt in the second short story "Jesus macht nicht mehr mit."[94] Here God does not die, but a soldier nicknamed Jesus has the task of lying down in freshly blasted graves, to ensure they are the right size for their future occupants. "Jesus," however, refuses to carry out his assigned duty, and is placed on report by the officer in charge for declining to perform the grim assignment. One, thus, observes how Borchert has put a new spin on Nietzsche's motif of the death of God. Where Nietzsche has God dying, seemingly without much of a struggle, controlled by the thoughts of man, Borchert speculates on the possibility of God having a mind of His own, shown in his refusal to die for men. This would appear to fly in the face of traditional theology which paints a picture of God who purposely sacrifices Himself for mankind. But for Borchert, God appears to have realized the unworthiness of man, refusing to live up to man-made expectations.

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[92] Borchert, Das Gesamtwerk 149. In this passage Borchert fills out in greater detail what the character of God meant in previous passages in Draußen vor der Tür where he simply says, "Ich bin der Gott, an den keiner mehr glaubt."

[93] There is a three volume collection of Nietzsche's works at the Borchert Archives in Hamburg which were part of Borchert's private collection; however, (Irmgard Schindler, current archivist, letter to the author, 12 July 1990.) they do not include any marginalia, proving that he had actually read these volumes. There is also the question of an edition of Also sprach Zarathustra which apparently has been lost. See page 19.

In the play Draußen vor der Tür Borchert once again plays with the idea of the death of God, but again does not go as far as Nietzsche who declares Him totally dead. In Draußen vor der Tür, God--that is the conventional God--has been shut out of society, and is left standing before the door just as Borchert's Heimkehrer Beckmann is refused re-entry to society. God and Beckmann are left in limbo, suspended in a dream world which exists between life and death. God is thus dead to the human world, even though He continues to exist in another. Beckmann then offers God the advice that he should go and hide to avoid being blamed for the world's catastrophes.[95]

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[94] Borchert, Das Gesamtwerk 178-181.

A motif closely related to the death of God concept, is that of God being the counter-concept to life. Again one finds allusions to this thought throughout Nietzsches work; however, Nietzsche only clarifies his position in Götzen-dämmerung: oder wie man mit dem Hammer philosophiert[96], and in Ecce Homo: Wie man wird, was man ist.[97] Nietzsche considers a follower of God to be "der ideale Kastrat," that is, the believer's will has been surgically removed, and his life ended where the "kingdom of God begins."[98] In Ecce Homo Nietzsche goes even further when he writes,

> "Der Begriff 'Gott' erfunden als Gegensatzbegriff zum Leben--in ihm alles Schädliche, Vergiftende, Verleumderische, die ganze Todfeindschaft gegen das Leben in eine entsetzliche Einheit gebracht!"[99]

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[95] Borchert, Das Gesamtwerk 150.

[96] Nietzsche, Götzen-dämmerung, Werke 939-1033.

[97] Friedrich Nietzsche, Ecce Homo: Wie man wird, was man ist, Friedrich Nietzsche: Werke in drei Bände, vol. 2, ed. Karl Schlechta (Munich: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1955) 1063-1159.

[98] Nietzsche, Götzen-dämmerung, Werke, vol. 2, 968.

[99] Nietzsche, Homo Ecce, Werke, vol. 2, 1159. Although there does not appear to be external evidence for Borchert having read this particular work, it is reasonable to

Borchert does not accept this Nietzschian view, but rather than simply ignore it, he reacts to it. In Draußen vor der Tür, he juxtaposes "death" (the new God) with God (the old man) leaving Beckmann trapped between the two, thus giving God a dual nature, rather than one which is simply evil or good. Borchert is also unwilling to ascribe fully the role of life to the old God, so he introduces a third character into the mix which is der Andere. Der Andere represents Beckmann's will to live, that is to carry on in the face of the horrors that confront him.[100] Der Andere urges Beckmann to strive for a third option, which is a life beyond that represented by the old God and death. He advocates leaving the past behind, thus permitting a reintegration into human society for Beckmann, and possibly permitting for God Himself a new role in conjunction with mankind.

Another of Borchert's borrowings from Nietzsche is the image of God as an old man. Nietzsche in his works continually refers to "der alte Gott," using the term alt to

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assume, considering Borchert's familiarity with Nietzsche, that he was familiar with the work. A catalogue of the contents of Borchert's personal library would be most helpful. One must also keep in mind that Borchert worked for a time as an apprentice in a bookstore, so that one may never be sure of all of the material that Borchert may have had more than a passing familiarity with.

[100] Migner 36-7.

refer to the God of past ages.[101] Although Borchert does not wish to place God's existence exclusively in the past as Nietzsche appears to, a correlation may still be found between Nietzsche's alter Gott and Borchert's old man. What Borchert succeeds in doing is blending Nietzsche's "alter Gott" with the image of the wise old man who watches over the world as found in the prevalent mythology of religion. Popular Christian myth tends to portray God as a wise old man who watches over the world, choosing to use only the positive traits that accompany advanced age, such as wisdom, while conveniently forgetting the negative aspects of old age. What Borchert does is use the image of the old man -- which is acceptable to traditional Christian thought -- and then give it a Nietzschean twist by accentuating the frailty of God's advanced years. God is thus no longer portrayed as the wise old grandfather, but as a frail old man who has one foot in the grave, with the implication that no one pays much attention to him any more. This becomes apparent for the first time in the dialogue between Beckmann and God in the fifth scene of Draußen vor der Tür, when God says to Beckmann, "Keiner glaubt mehr an mich. Du nicht, keiner. Ich bin der Gott, an den keiner mehr glaubt. Und um den sich keiner mehr kümmert. Ihr kümmert euch nicht um mich."[102] God in this case reflects the words of many older people who feel abandoned by their children, whose actions and beliefs they are no longer able to affect.

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[101] Nietzsche, Also sprach Zarathustra, Werke vol. 2, 498.

The lack of regard that God feels coming from his "children" was already touched on by Nietzsche in "Menschliches, Allzumenschliches" where one finds the same sort of emotions directed towards God by the prisoners. In the passage of "Die Gefangenen" Nietzsche writes the following: " Die Gefangenen lachten nicht, zuckten aber mit den Achseln und ließen ihn stehen."[103] It appears that Nietzsche's prisoners do not have the will to listen to the message of hope any longer, because reality has taught them differently. God has become impotent for them, not because he has kept them out of difficulty, but, on the contrary, because He has kept them imprisoned. Borchert's Beckmann reacts to God in much the same manner, because he cannot believe in a God who has not prevented his suffering. That which Nietzsche articulated through the action of the prisoners turning their backs on God, Borchert puts into words when God says to Beckmann, "Meine Kinder haben sich von mir gewandt, nicht ich von ihnen. Ihr von mir, ihr von mir. Ich bin der Gott an den keiner mehr glaubt. Ihr habt euch von mir gewandt."[104] This is a thread which runs through Draußen vor der Tür, and one that becomes Borchert's main position in regard to the existant relationship between man and God. Borchert, in doing so, shifts the blame for the death or impotence of God to man.

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[102] Borchert, Das Gesamtwerk 148.

[103] Nietzsche, Menschliches Allzumenschliches, Werke, vol. 1 915.

Borchert also weaves the motif of the use and abuse of God into the general theme of the estrangement of God from man. This motif may be found in Nietzsche as well, and is perhaps the most complicated of all the motifs Borchert borrows from Nietzsche. However, it is Borchert who complicates the motif rather than Nietzsche, because Borchert does not directly attack the church, but does so obliquely when he criticizes God in Draußen vor der Tür. Nietzsche's dissatisfaction with the manner in which the Christian church abused God may be found throughout his works, but no where is it clearer than in Der Antichrist: Fluch auf das Christentum.[105] In Der Antichrist, Nietzsche directs the following criticism against the concept of God as promulgated by the established church,

> Zu dem gleichen Schlusse nötigt eine Kritik des christlichen Gottesbegriffs. . . . Die widernatürliche Kastration eines Gottes zu einem

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[104] Borchert, Das Gesamtwerk 149.

[105] Friedrich Nietzsche, Der Antichrist: Fluch auf das Christentum, Friedrich Nietzsche: Werke in drei Bänden, vol. 2, ed. Karl Schlechta (Munich: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1955) 1161-1238.

> Gotte bloß des Guten läge hier außerhalb aller Wünschbarkeit.[106]

Nietzsche goes on to say that it is just such a "castrated" God who causes a people to become weak.[107]

Borchert also portrays this "castrated" figure of God, in that God is portrayed as the epitome of all that is ineffectual. God can only run about the stage, rubbing his hands, and bemoaning the fate of his children. God's impotence, however, is not of his own doing. For Borchert, it is man, who has relegated Him to this lowly status. It is the "Theologentinte"[108] transfused into his veins by man that has caused him to fall from his position of power. Nietzsche expresses this same sentiment in "Das Eselfest" of Also sprach Zarathustra, where God is made into the image with which man feels comfortable. In "Das Eselfest" the pope answers Zarathustra query about the foolishness of worshipping an ass by saying, "O Zarathustra, . . . vergib mir, aber in Dingen Gottes bin ich aufgeklärter noch als du. Und so ist's billig. Lieber Gott so anbeten, in dieser Gestalt, als in gar keiner Gestalt![109] In both Nietzsche and Borchert the image of God has become a ridiculous parody, of what He once was, at the hands of those who are responsible for maintaining Him within society. The theologians appear as rationalizing their beliefs by saying that such a god is better than no god at all. However, sustaining God at all costs--even to the point of absurdity--shows how God has become impotent in the hands of his handlers.

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[106] Nietzsche, Der Antichrist, Werke, vol.2, 1176.

[107] Nietzsche, Der Antichrist, Werke vol. 2, 1176.

[108] Borchert, Das Gesamtwerk 149.

[109] Nietzsche, Also sprach Zarathustra, Werke, vol. 2, 548.

After having taken God to the absurd, both Nietzsche and Borchert contend that God has become unbelievable. Nietzsche expresses the implausibility of God in Die fröhliche Wissenschaft, when he comments,

> Das größte neuere Ereignis -- daß 'Gott tot ist', das der Glauben an den christlichen Gott unglaubwürdig geworden ist--beginnt bereits seine ersten Schatten über Europa zu werfen."[110]

Borchert reiterates the doubt about the credibility of God through the repeated statement "Ich bin der Gott an den keiner mehr glaubt." Both Nietzsche and Borchert are dealing with a God who has been manipulated by the forces of the religious establishment, and attempt to impress upon the reader how ridiculous God has become, through their exaggeration of the logical end to which the God of the theologians must come.

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[110] Nietzsche, Die fröhliche Wissenschaft, Werke, vol. 2 205.

Nietzsche goes further in his indictment of the church when he calls the churches the crypt and headstone of God.[111] Borchert also echoes this sentiment in Draußen vor der Tür when Beckmann says to God, "Geh, alter Mann, sie haben dich in den Kirchen eingemauert, wir hören einander nicht mehr."[112]

The one point upon which Borchert diverges most notably from Nietzsche concerning God, is the element of the hope which God brings to the world. Nietzsche sees no hope for the resurrection of God, and appears to want man to accept that fact and move on--although one gets the impression that even Nietzsche at times regrets the death of God. The death of God is casting its shadow across Europe, and Nietzsche appears to be prophesying the impending conflagrations that were about to grip Europe.[113] Nietzsche appears to fear a future without God when he has the sorcerer say in Also sprach Zarathustra, "--euch allen, die ihr am großen Ekel leidet gleich mir, denen der alte Gott starb und noch kein neuer Gott in Wiegen und Windeln liegt."[114] Borchert, however, had survived the devastation that Nietzsche predicted. Borchert thus set about searching for a new God, one who could once more bring hope to humanity, and indeed he appears to have found him in Windeln und in einer Wiege.

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[111] Nietzsche, Die fröhliche Wissenschaft, Werke, vol. 2 128.

[112] Borchert, Das Gesamtwerk 149.

[113] Michael Harrington, The Politics at God's Funeral: The Spiritual Crisis of Western Civilization (New York: Holt, Reinhard and Winston, 1983) 2-3.

[114] Nietzsche, Also sprach Zarathustra, Werke, vol. 2, 532.

The God that Borchert finds is portrayed in the short story "Die drei dunkeln Könige," which is a depiction of the birth of Christ set in the aftermath of World War II. In this story, Borchert does not place his hope in the Nietzschean Übermensch[115] or in the "old God" who had been created by the protectors of religious orthodoxy, but goes back to the origins of Christianity, wherein the birth of Christ brings hope to a lost world.

Borchert also does not limit his message of hope, and refutation of Nietzsche's nihilism, to the new generation that will have to cope with the Germany that has been left to them by their fathers. There is still a glimmer of hope shining forth from the old God, as found in "Nachts schlafen die Ratten doch." In this story one finds an old man who offers hope to a young boy who is guarding his brother's body from the rats. The old man lies to the boy about the sleeping habits of rats, thus saving him from sleepless nights. In doing so, one sees how the old God can still bring comfort to a new generation, when he lifts the burden of death from the shoulders of the young boy who was old beyond his years, and in a manner of speaking allowed him to be a child once more.

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[115] As found throughout Nietzsche's Also sprach Zarathustra.

As can be seen from the above comparison, Nietzsche and Borchert do indeed have a great deal in common. One may also observe Borchert not only mirrors Nietzsche's philosophy to a large degree, but refutes Nietzsche's ideas when they do not agree with his own views. When one analyzes the textual and thematic similarities between Borchert and Nietzsche, one receives a clearer picture of what the concept of God is in Borchert's works. One sees firstly that for Borchert God is not dead, but only old and weak. It also becomes apparent that Borchert draws a sharp distinction between God the highest being, and God the highest thought that man can imagine--a distinction that Nietzsche at times also appears to make, but more often than not simply leaves God as a prisoner of man's highest thoughts. Borchert may thus be seen as someone who was dissatified with the God that had been created by the theologians, and one who was in search of the true God. Borchert hoped to find this authentic God by writing with a hammer, just as Nietzsche intended to philosophize with a hammer, discarding the old image of the Märchenbuchliebergott; replacing Him with a God, who would meet the needs of post-war Germany. In doing so, Borchert strips away the myth which surrounds God, and the barriers that the church erects to hold Him captive. Thus humanity can once more enjoy direct contact with a God who is not a eunuch, but offers hope to a world turned upside-down.

One also sees Borchert emerging not as a Gottesleugner and Nihilist as popularized by Rühmkorf, but as someone who wants very much to believe in a God. The only difficulty being that Borchert was not satisfied with what had become of God in Christianity, and thus must begin to search for his own God. The only way in which Borchert could realize his own concept of God was by destroying the old concept of God. Unfortunately, up until now Borchert had been identified with Nietzsche's nihilism, without the commentators examining exactly how Nietzsche's philosophy was actually being used by Borchert, in his works.

D. Barlach's Influence in the Works of Wolfgang Borchert.

The influence of Barlach on Borchert's work goes beyond the simple fact of Borchert having read Barlach, for Barlach was a popular topic of discussion in the Borchert household. One finds evidence of this in the fact that a close personal friend of the elder Borchert was a certain Friedrich Schult, who would do nothing but discuss Barlach on his visits to the Borcherts.[116] Schult, who was an acquaintance of

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[116] Schröder, (1985) 34.

Barlach's, was mentioned by Barlach in the September 14, 1914 entry of his Güstrower Tagebuch,[117] though not in entirely glowing terms. Nevertheless, Schult went on to take charge of Barlach's Nachlaß at Güstrow after his death.[118] Unfortunately, the content of the discussions which took place in the Borchert home are lost to posterity, but we do know that Barlach was highly regarded. It is clear that the young Borchert found himself in an environment in which Barlach exercised a more than passing influence. Barlach's sway is indicated by Rühmkorf when he notes that Borchert often would quote Barlach in his letters, when his own words failed to communicate his feelings.[119]

Although one might say that Borchert's works are simply an extension of the earlier expressionist movement in Germany, there is little evidence that Borchert was influenced by any other expressionist than Barlach. Fickert, in his monograph, does make a general statement about the relationship between Borchert and the Expressionists; "Borchert's historical vignettes are couched in the language of literary expressionism. . . ."[120] However, Fickert does not go into depth on this subject. Thus it is necessary that this study limit itself to Barlach.[121]

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[117] Ernst Barlach, Das dichterische Werk: in drei Bänden, vol.3 (Munich: R.Piper & Co., 1959) 58-57.

[118] Schröder, (1985) 333, endnote #6.

[119] Rühmkorf 27.

Barlach's Die Sündflut[122] appears to have had a great influence on Borchert's works. In Die Sündflut one finds a retelling of the story of the biblical flood. However, Barlach adds to the story when he creates the character Calan, who challenges Noah's belief in God. One also notes that God appears to both Noah and Calan, but in different guises. In the last two scenes Calan finds himself tied to the dead body of his son, with both Noah and the handless shepherd powerless to assist him.[123] It is, however, Barlach's portrayal of God which appears to have had the greatest influence on Borchert. Edson Chick, in his Barlach biography and interpretation, notes,

> Finally, Barlach does not hesitate to bring God onto the stage in all too human guise. As the ineffectual wanderer in Die Sündflut, he is the

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[120] Fickert 6.

[121] It may well be that there is a greater connection to be made between Borchert and the expressionists; however, until all of Borchert's letters and other material are made available in an easily accessable form, this will be impossible.

[122] Ernst Barlach, Das dichterische Werk: in drei Bänden, vol.1 (Munich: R. Piper & Co., 1959) 319-383. All subsequent references will be taken from this volume.

[123] Barlach 374-383.

> forerunner of Wolfgang Borchert's 'old man in whom no one believes any longer' in Draußen vor der Tür.[124]

Unfortunately, Chick does not go into specifics to support his assertion.

In the following comparison it will become evident that Chick's suggestion is correct, that Barlach's God in Die Sündflut is indeed the prototype for the concept of God as presented in Borchert's works. The only divergence is that Barlach's God is as he appears before the flood, and Borchert's has to deal with a world attempting to come to grips with life, after the catastrophe has subsided.

As noted above, there are striking similarities between the figure of God presented by Barlach and Borchert's God figure. The correspondence between the two God-concepts is not limited to Die Sündflut and Draußen vor der Tür. There are other works in which the God-concepts of Borchert and Barlach make contact, as between Barlach's Der Findling[125] and Borchert's "Die drei dunkeln Könige." One may also recognise Barlach's tendency to represent God as a dual entity; that is, God is embodied by more than one character on stage within the same play, as in Die Sündflut where God is represented by Der Reisende and Der Bettler. This is also the case in Der Findling where God is solely represented by Der rote Kaiser but does make allusions to his other self when he says, "Ich bin ein Bettelherr . . . ."[126] It appears that Barlach felt God was too multifaceted to be represented by one character, or that the paradox of God embracing both good and evil, could not be represented in the same personality. Borchert appears to have been engaged in the same struggle as Barlach, in that Borchert's God also seems to have two sides to His nature, although Borchert does not juxtapose them in the same manner as Barlach. One perhaps sees this dichotomy best in the opposing God-figures found in Draußen vor der Tür and "Nachts schlafen die Ratten doch." In both cases the God figure is represented by an old man. In Draußen vor der Tür, God is shown as impotent in his ability to act upon the world, and, thus by extension, possibly guilty of allowing man's inhumanity when Beckmann says, "Du [God] hast es nur zugelassen."[127] In "Nachts schlafen die Ratten doch," however, God is seen once more in the company of humans and is effective in lifting at least one person's physical and, more importantly, spiritual suffering. Moreover, even though Borchert consistently represents God as an old "beggar" as Barlach does, Borchert also makes allusions to the "kingship" of God, as seen in "Die drei dunkeln Könige" where presents are brought by the "kings," as in the biblical account.

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[124] Edson Chick, Ernst Barlach Twayne's World Author Series 26 (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1967) 108.

[125] Barlach 267-317.

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[126] Barlach 171.

[127] Borchert, Das Gesamtwerk 148. Beckmann is referring to the the death of his son during a bombing raid.

For Barlach and Borchert, God appears to encompass good and evil simultaneously; both authors seem to be looking for an explanation to this apparent contradiction. Indeed, the problem of God and evil existing simultaneously is a problem which has been discussed by many, in particular after the atrocities of the Second World War. George Schlesinger, in his article "Suffering and Evil,"[128] outlines the various explanations for evil existing in the world. The various positions range from divine punishment to the non-existence of God. The position which Barlach and Borchert appear to take is that of God having created free agents with which He may interact. This may be seen in the manner in which both authors place the blame for the existence of evil with man and not God. Man is thus responsible for the good that is found in the world.

Barlach and Borchert see humanity as having received a second chance to make a better world than the one which was left behind. Barlach conveys this in the fact that Noah and his family have been saved from the flood. However, as Chick points out, "It [the ark] also carries a collection of human beings whose natures insure that the world will be no better or worse after the flood."[129] Borchert incorporates this same motif in Draußen vor der Tür when he has Beckmann visit various characters who have also survived the "flood," but show no or little change in attitude, contenting themselves to once more go along with the ways of the world, even after the consequences of such action have been made evident. They choose to ignore the lesson that is to be learned.

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[128] George Schlesinger, "Suffering and Evil," Contemporary Philosophy of Religion (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982) 25-31.

For Barlach estrangement lies at the heart of the problem existing between humanity and God. This point is perhaps best made when Noah is only with difficulty able to recognize his "father" in the face of the beggar.[130] Beckmann echoes the same thought when he meets God for the first time. Although Beckmann does not need to be told that the old man is indeed God, there remains an element of uncertainty, because God does not appear as he had imagined: "Nur etwas zu theologisch. Und so weinerlich."[131] To dispel any doubt as to who the old man is, Beckmann asks the old man if he is God, to which he receives an affirmative answer. God is thus portrayed as not always recognizable to man by Barlach and Borchert.

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[129] Chick 70-71.

[130] Barlach 345-46.

[131] Borchert, Das Gesamtwerk 147.

A second element in the concept of God on which both Barlach and Borchert agree is that God is lost. In point of fact Barlach echoes Nietzsche when the Beggar in Die Sündflut states, "Die vergangene Zeit hat mich vergessen, und ich habe mich verloren, bin verirrt und verlaufen."[132] This in turn is re-echoed by Borchert, when Beckmann shouts, "Wo ist denn der alte Mann, der sich Gott nennt?" and finally, "Gibt denn keiner, keiner Antwort?"[133] However, both Barlach and Borchert are at variance with Nietzsche on one vital point. Whereas Nietzsche advocates man turning his back on God and finding his own way, Barlach and Borchert recommend man's search for God. Their characters, although not satisfied with the God they discover, continue to demand an answer from God.

A second point of contact between Nietzsche, Barlach and Borchert, is the question of the source of the "new Saviour". Even though they appear to come to different conclusions on the nature of this "new Savior", they all agree that he will spring from within humanity itself. Nietzsche suggests that man raise himself to the level of God, after the discovery that man has murdered him, as shown in Nietzsche's concept of the Übermensch. This same imagery is mirrored in Barlach's Der Findling when Vesper reads,

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[132] Barlach 346.

[133] Borchert, Das Gesamtwerk 165.

> "Der rote Kaiser gibt dem Land bekannt: Gott ist im Menschen, und wer Menschen frißt, frißt Gott. Euch wird nach mir der Heiland geboren. Schafft euren Heiland, Weiber, zur Welt!"[134]

The characters of Der Findling take this message literally, and kill and consume "God." At the very end of Der Findling a birth does occur, and Thomas declares that Elise has become the mother of God.[135] Borchert uses this same reflection in "Die drei dunkeln Konige" where the child that has been born takes on the attributes of the Christ child. The picture of the child is almost identical with the imagery of Der Findling. Barlach, in a stage direction, instructs that, "Elise hebt ein leuchtend schönes Kind auf, es blickt munter um sich."[136] Borchert illustrates the same picture when he writes,

> Als er [the Man] die Ofentür aufmachte, fiel wieder eine Handvoll Licht über das schlafende Gesicht. Die Frau sagte leise: Kuck, wie ein Heiligenschein, siehst du?[137]

The infants in both works illuminate an otherwise dark world as a symbol of hope, indicating that the new generation has been given a second chance and is at the same time the new hope for the world. Barlach and Borchert both thus agree and disagree with Nietzsche, in that, hope for the future will come from humanity, but not in the form that Nietzsche suggests.

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[134] Barlach 273.

[135] Barlach 316.

[136] Barlach 316.

[137] Borchert Das Gesamtwerk, 186.

Another of the motifs that Borchert's works share with Barlach's Die Sündflut is that of man being the architect of his own destruction. As the flood waters rise, Barlach makes this reference when he has Calan meet up with the shepherd, whose hands he had cut off in the second part.[138] The shepherd represents Calan's last hope of escaping his bondage, but the shepherd has no hands with which to untie him; thus, Calan ultimately has caused his own death. Borchert, although he does not use the same allusion, also places the blame for man's misfortune squarely on his own doorstep. He systematically cuts off the various ways in which man might blame forces other than himself for his circumstances. In "Dann gibt es nur eins!"[139] where Borchert implores humanity to give up the dangerous pasttime of war, he demonstrates how man indeed has engaged in the activities which have brought the horrors of war upon himself. In this work he shows how it is the actions of apparently well-meaning people that have created the means with which man destroys himself, just as Calan sowed the seeds of his own end when he tempted God by having the hands of the shepherd cut off and nailed to a post.

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[138] Barlach 380-81.

[139] Borchert, Das Gesamtwerk 318-21.

All of the grotesque symbolism which Barlach employs in both Die Sündflut and Der Findling leads to what Chick has termed "die Ekelkur."[140] The purpose of the Ekelkur is for man to become so revolted by what he sees, that when he sees himself in Barlach's plays he will be moved to change himself. Barlach's "Ekelkur" compares well with what appears to be Borchert's intended purpose for Draußen vor der Tür. In the often overlooked second part of Borchert's motto for the play he states, "Eine Injektion Nihilismus bewirkt oft, daß man aus lauter Angst wieder Mut zum Leben bekommt."[141] One could just as easily exchange Borchert's "Nihilismus" for Barlach's "Ekel", and one would have an appropriate motto for Barlach's two plays. One may surmise that both Barlach and Borchert attempted to portray humanity at its worst, taking man's deeds to their logical end, hopefully moving humankind to rethink its endeavours.

From the above comparison of Barlach and Borchert, it becomes clear that Barlach was indeed an important influence in Borchert's formulation of his God-concept. Both Barlach and Borchert present the audience with an unaccustomed image of God, thus employing a form of the Brechtian

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[140] Chick 58. Indeed Chick points out that he has borrowed this term to describe the purpose of the grotesquery in all of Barlach's plays from a line spoken by Frau Venus in Der Arme Vetter, Werke, vol.3, 147.

[141] Schröder, (1985) 21.

"Verfremdungseffekt." In doing so, they hope to compel their audiences to reconsider their own image of God, which is often that of Borchert's "Märchenbuchliebergott." No such concept of God remains in the works of either Barlach or Borchert, its childishness having succumbed to the harsh reality presented by the authors.

III. The Function and Meaning of Borchert's Concept of God, "An Injection of Nihilism."

As outlined earlier, the general consensus among Borchert scholars, with a few exceptions such as Klarmann, is that Borchert unequivocally denied God. However, as we have seen, this position is suspect. What often occurs within the criticism of those who are of roughly the same generation as Borchert, is that they rely on their own recollections of Borchert.[142] A second method, employed by those who engaged in researching Borchert's works after his death, is interviews with people who were acquaintances of Borchert.[143] They then use these eyewitness accounts to reconstruct Borchert's literary intentions by comparing them with Borchert's works. A difficulty, however, arises when these personal accounts do not agree with what is to be found in Borchert's works. The cause of these discrepancies may be accounted for when one considers the overall unreliability of eyewitness accounts, which has been documented by psychologists.[144]

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[142] As is the case with Rühmkorf and Meyer-Marwitz.

[143] Popper for instance.

[144] Joseph Alba and Lynn Hasher, "Is Memory Schematic?" Psychological Bulletin 93 (1983): 203-31. Alba and Hasher give evidence that memory is not only frequently incomplete, but occassionally highly distorted.

A case in point is the discussion which took place between Hans Popper and Aline Bußmann, the wife of Dr. Hager and Borchert's confidant, when Popper was researching his article.[145] Popper questioned her about the numerous biblical allusions which are found in Borchert's works--considering his own and his family's strong atheism. She simply replied, "Religious instruction in the schools, in those days, had been extremely efficient."[146] The approach taken, and the answer given, however, raise some questions on the part of both the interviewer and the interviewee. In the case of the interviewer, it appears that his mind was already made up, losing the objectivity of inquiry.[147] Bußmann's answer, however, is somewhat more difficult to assess, for one must give her the benefit of the doubt, and assume that she was giving an honest answer to the question Popper posed. Her testimony is, however, suspect, on the grounds that it does not appear to agree with the sentiments expressed to her in at least one letter she received from

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[145] Numerous examples of letters Borchert wrote to her may be found in Rühmkorf and Schröder.

[146] Hans Popper, letter to the author, 10 July 1990.

[147] In no way ought Popper be faulted for the preconceived notions that he may have held in regard to Borchert's so called atheism. He was only following the traditional Borchert dogma instigated by Rühmkorf, which presents only the nihilistic and God-denying Borchert.

Borchert.[148] Thus one is confronted by the subjectivity of selective memory, with the witnesses imposing their personal feelings in their judgement of Borchert's atheism. From the example given above, one sees how the methodology of research into Borchert has been flawed by subjective assessments not based on the corpus of works which he left to posterity.[149] Given the bias towards accepting the assertion that Borchert was an atheist, it is necessary to comb systematically through Borchert's works to ascertain the concept of God Borchert held, which may not be represented in its entirety in the memories of those who knew him.

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[148] Rühmkorf includes a number of examples of poems which Borchert included in his letters to Bußmann, however he only includes those which have a negative tone, as when Borchert quotes Gottfried Benn,

Fratze der Glaube,
Fratze der Glück--
leer kommt die Taube
Noahs zurück. (middle of June 1940)
(Rühmkorf 52)

Rühmkorf, however, does not mention that Borchert had included a very positive sounding poem sent to Bußmann from Saalfeld on October 12, 1943, which reads,

Die Erde sinkt zurück,
die Fesseln und die Schmerzen:
Ich bin am Himmel Stern geworden
und fühl im All den Schlag
von Gottes weitem Herzen.
(Gumtau 30)

[149] Unfortunately Borchert's correspondence is not easily accessible. A scholar must usually be satisfied with those letters which have been published in various articles and books.

Another of the difficulties present in Borchert scholarship is the order of presentation in interpretations which attempt to deal with all of his works. An example of the traditional chronology is Fickert's _Signs and Portents_, where he presents the reader with Borchert's works in the order in which they appear in his published works. Although there may be some justification for such an approach--this is the order in which Borchert presented them to the public--it does not allow a scholar to look at the order in which Borchert himself wrote the works, or to analyze the chronology of his thoughts on the subject of God. Upon organizing Borchert's works into their chronological order of production, one finds that his approach to his God-concept is not as unsystematic as it at first appears. One sees that that there is indeed a development of his God-concept from the _Märchenbuchliebergott_ to one in which God is ineffable. To this end, this enquiry will follow the order of production rather than publication, noting the various occurrences of God and what they reveal about Borchert's God-concept.[150]

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[150] A partial chronology of Borchert's works as recorded by Borchert himself has been given by Rühmkorf 132-33, to which has been added new information from Schroder and de Sterio. To this point in time it is the most inclusive chronology. See appendix.

A. The Concept of God in Borchert's Poetry

Borchert's poetry belongs exclusively to the early part of his writing career. It could even be said, that he did not take it very seriously. At the time, acting was his passion, and when he did become serious about his writing after the end of the war, his poetry ceased, except on the rare occasion when it was included in a short story, such as "Das Känguruh."[151] Up to the present, little attention has been paid to the early, poetic phase of his writing career, most scholars judging his poetry to be of a low quality. The quality of Borchert's poetry, however, is not a consideration in this investigation.

Borchert's poetry reveals that he is still very much in the realm of the "Märchenbuchliebergott", which had not yet been shattered by the reality of the destruction of the Second World War. However, even in the early stages of his writing one is able to note that Borchert had begun to question the dual nature of God, that is, to ponder whether He is good or evil, or both, or neither. In the poem "Grossstadt" Borchert presents this dichotomy in his description of the relationship between the individual and the big city.[152] In the first stanza the "Gottin

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[151] Borchert, Das Gesamtwerk 213-216.

[152] Borchert oddly enough spells the title of the poem with three s's, while spelling "Großstadt" correctly throughout the rest of the poem.

Großstadt"[153] throws man out into the world and leaves him to his own devices. This is a foreshadowing of the Goddess of the Elbe throwing Beckmann back into the land of the living.[154] In the following two stanzas, Borchert identifies the city alternately as whore and mother, playing with the affection of man and comforting him when his energy is spent. For Borchert the city is thus a paradox, both good and evil at the same time, just as God appears to encompass both natures in his later works.

Because the positive tone of the poem "Kinderlied"[155] is similar to a poem he wrote to Bußmann on the 12th of October 1943, one could probably also place it in the time period before "Grossstadt." "Kinderlied" is uncharacteristically optimistic. He begins each of the three stanzas with the same question, "Wo wohnt der liebe Gott?" It contains none of the bitterness or sarcasm of the same question put to God in Draußen vor der Tür. This may be seen in the playful manner in which he answers his own question in all three stanzas. It is clear that Borchert is approvingly engaged in the character of the Märchenbuchliebergott, whom he later came to treat with such disdain. Nevertheless, already existing in this poem are certain attributes of God which he retained until the very end of his life. God, as described in this poem, is pantheistic; He may be found in all of creation. God is immanent, and appears to care about his creation and is actively involved in seeing to its needs. This may be seen with the fish which he teaches to swim for its own sake, and the calf to leap so that it does not fall.[156] In the third stanza, Borchert turns his attention to man. God does not work in man directly, but through an outside agency, the lilac bush, which he teaches to smell sweet to please the human nose. Borchert sees humanity as the centre of the universe, with all of creation for his enjoyment, a view he later rejects. However, there is already a distance between man and God, because contact with man is only made through an intermediate agency, as is the case with the lilac bush -- although not to the point of estrangement as seen in his later works.

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[153] Borchert, Das Gesamtwerk 20.

[154] Borchert, Das Gesamtwerk 106-7.

[155] Borchert, Das Gesamtwerk 267.

"Versuch es"[157] is written in the same vein as "Kinderlied," and takes on the attitude of a child's prayer. Borchert asks the reader to immerse himself in nature, and to let it envelop him. His choices of rain (water), wind (air) and fire hark back to the primeval forces of nature, which the ancient Greeks believed to be the basic elements

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[156] Borchert, Das Gesamtwerk 267.

[157] Borchert, Das Gesamtwerk 268.

Borchert realizes that life is filled with difficulties. The elements intensify in their destructiveness as he moves through the three stanzas, but at the same time Borchert calls upon the believer to withstand their power, to be good and endure.

On the 12th of October 1943, as already mentioned above, Borchert enclosed a poem in a letter to Aline Bußmann.[161] In the poem Borchert once more makes use of childlike imagery concerning God. But the line, "Ich bin am Himmel Stern geworden . . ." goes beyond simply describing what Borchert felt at the time; it gives a clue to the perspective from which he viewed God. In a subsequent poem to his mother, Borchert strengthens the evidence for his having been influenced by Steiner's anthroposophy, when he writes, of creation[158]--only earth is missing.[159] One could come to the conclusion that Borchert is not referring to a modern Christian concept of God at all, but a pantheistic God. Indeed, this particular concept of God remains with him to the end of his life.[160] However, he does insert a repeated line at the end of each stanza, which identifies these forces with the "Christian" God: "und versuche gut zu sein." Rather than personify God, as is the case with traditional Christian religious myth, Borchert identifies God in nature. Borchert, in so doing, also creates distance between himself and the conventional Christian belief. Although Borchert wrote "Versuch es" in the style of a child's prayer, the thoughts on the nature of God go beyond the childlike.

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[161] Gumtau 30.

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[158] Philip Wheelwright ed., The Presocratics (New York: Macmillan, 1985) References to the basic elements may be found in the fragments of Xenophanes (33) and Aristotle's report on Thales (44).

[159] Borchert may not have wished to include earth in this poem, because if earth were to surround a person as the other elements do, it would possibly signify death, and this poem appears to celebrate life. It is also possible that Borchert associated earth with the "Blut und Boden" philosophy of the National Socialists, another reason for not including it.

[160] Borchert is reported by Rühmkorf to have given an interview while in Switzerland 1947, in which he answers the question of his being a religious writer with the following answer: "Natürlich bin ich ein religiöser Dichter. Ich verberge es nicht. Ich glaube an die Sonne, den Walfisch, meine Mutter und and das Gras. Genügt das nicht? Das Gras ist nämlich nicht nur Gras." (Rühmkorf 162.) One could possibly interpret Borchert's answer to be sarcastic; however, given the seriousness of his works, it is unlikely that this is the case.

> Warum soll Christus meines Glaubens Mitte sein?
> Ich glaub an Shakespeare, Bach und Goya.
> Man kann doch auch für Nietzsche oder Rilke sein,
> vielleicht auch für Dionysos, für Steiner und
> Loyola.[162]

Steiner's anthroposophy holds that the properly trained intellect may access the spiritual world, and that man is the centre of religious belief rather than God.[163] This belief may be seen as a thread running through the rest of Borchert's work; man is the active agent rather than God (the passive creation of man's thoughts). Man gains access to God (the independent supreme being) through an active search, and can only find Him by immersing himself in pantheism. However, when one adds the further thoughts which Borchert expresses on the nature of God in Draußen vor der Tür, where man and God appear to be interdependent, one comes to the conclusion that Borchert's concept of God is panentheistic; that is God may be manifest within nature, but requires man to perceive his existence, so that He may be.

On the 15th of July 1945, Borchert included a cycle of 15 quatrains in a letter to his mother, which outlined the nature of his religious beliefs at the time.[164] Although artistically the poems are indifferent, they give a good indication of the position he held in relation to God at the beginning of a period which saw the greater amount of literary production. The 15 short poems were intended to be read as a cycle, with each addressing a specific aspect of the Christian faith.

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[162] Schröder, (1985) 243. My emphasis on Steiner.

[163] "Steiner, Rudolph, Funk and Wagnells New Encyclopedia, 1983.

[164] Schröder, (1985) 242-244.

The first poem, "Der kleine Ketzer," acts as a salutation to his mother, and as an apology for the forthrightness which is to follow.[165] Borchert also realizes that his beliefs will not be well received by the orthodox religious community, in that he proclaims himself to be a heretic in the title of the first poem. However, heresy in this case does not entail a rejection of God, but an alternative to the traditional God. "Der kleine Ketzer" also offers evidence that his mother may not have been the atheist which Rühmkorf, among others, appear to categorize her as. Borchert states: ". . . du versuchst es jede / Minute, mich mit Christus vollzustopfen."[166] which indicates that Borchert's mother may have spoken to him about his lack of Christian convictions, but does not necessarily mean that he denied God.

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[165] Schröder, (1985) 242.

[166] Schröder, (1985) 242.

In the next poem, "Trost in der Religion,"[167] Borchert gives his reasons for rejecting the Christian belief system. He appears to criticize Christian complacency when he states that he wants more out of life than "glücklich und zufrieden sein-- . . . Zufrieden ist der Käfer und das Schwein."[168] From this, Borchert implies that spiritual life must go beyond the motions of Christian worship. Borchert follows "Trost in der Religion" with a poem entitled "Christliche Ethik."[169] Here he accuses the Christian ethic of being no better than any other ethic. He points out that,

> Ein brauner Rowdie aus Formosa
> [der] schlägt seine Weiber auch nicht öfter tot
> als sein Pendant hier in Europa.[170]

Borchert points out the hypocrisy of a people who lead a dual life; that is, the Christian ethic is accepted in theory, but is not evident in their actions. Borchert, however, in no way blames God for this contradiction, but lays the blame on the doorstep of man, who has ceased to search for God and has become content with religious practice. As an alternative to what Borchert calls the "Kreuzes-Kult,"[171] he expresses his yearning for the sensual in the next poem, "Christliche Geduld."[172] Borchert sees Christian patience to be "unerotisch", and would rather heap "guilt upon guilt, just to experience one moment of God's grace."[173]

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[167] Schröder, (1985) 242.

[168] Schröder, (1985) 242.

[169] Schröder, (1985) 242.

[170] Schröder, (1985) 242.

[171] Schröder, (1985) 242.

In the fifth poem of the lyrical cycle, "Amouren--so und so,"[174] Borchert shifts the emphasis to the hypocrisy of Nächstenliebe, and how the world is devoid of it. Borchert, however, in no way attacks the idea of Nächstenliebe itself, simply pointing out that it does not seem to manifest itself in humanity.

To gain access to society, Borchert suggests that Homer would be a better point of departure than the words of the Bible. He indicates, in "Einkehr,"[175] that literature may be a better way of learning how to deal with the difficulties of life than the supposed words of God. In "Vom Glauben"[176] Borchert expands on "Einkehr." Borchert rejects Christ as the centre of his belief, and asks: why not believe in the writings of any number of other writers, who have expressed the essence of the human condition? Borchert, however, does not reject Christ wholesale; he still allows Christ as part of a larger synthesized belief system in which varying perspectives play their part. Borchert argues for the superiority of the synthesized perspective; however, nowhere does he attack God as evil or uncaring.

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[172] Schröder, (1985) 242-43.

[173] Schröder, (1985) 243.

[174] Schröder, (1985) 243.

[175] Schröder, (1985) 243.

[176] Schröder, (1985) 243.

In the twelfth poem, "Der große Unbekannte,"[177] Borchert begins to address directly the question of God, and the nature of God, when he writes, "Und Gott? fragst du, wo läßt du ihn?"[178] His answer to this question is, "Im Unbekannten, wo er immer war."[179] Borchert's answer is a challenge to the theologians who seem to search in vain to package God in a manner that is palatable to man. Borchert does go on to explain what he believes the attributes of God to be, even though He remains the great unknown. Borchert writes,

> Doch dies sag ich ihm [God] ins Gesicht:
> Vielleicht bist du die Liebe und das Sein,
> doch gut, Gott, bist du nicht--
> von wem soll sonst das Böse sein?[180]

Borchert in this poem comes face to face with the classic problem of good and evil; if God is indeed omnipotent, omniscient and all-loving, why does evil exist? Borchert appears to retreat from this position in his later works when he claims that God is neutral, and does not encompass the concepts of good and evil.

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[177] Schröder, (1985) 243-44.

[178] Schröder, (1985) 243.

[179] Schröder, (1985) 243.

[180] Schröder, (1985) 244.

In this overview of how Borchert presents, in his poetry, his concept of God in his poetry, it becomes apparent that Borchert had not yet completely thought through the problem of God. The God found in Borchert's poetry is rather sketchy, taking the form of notes that were to be used later in his published play and short stories. Evidence for his poetry being a literary sketch book may be found in a comparison between "Ich bete auch"[181] of the 15 poem cycle and his first prose work, "Die Hundeblume." In the poem he compares the plucking of a dandelion with an act of worship. In "Die Hundeblume" the dandelion becomes a prisoners connection to the outside world, and a symbol of hope for the prisoner who finds himself on an endless treadmill.

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[181] Schröder, (1985) 244.

B. The Concept of God in Borchert's Short Stories and in the play Draußen vor der Tür. An Injection of Nihilism.

In the short stories and the one published play, Borchert comes into his own as a writer. To a large degree he has been categorized as a writer of Heimkehrer literature, without due consideration being given to other aspects of his work. While it is true that the situation of the German soldier returning to a devastated Germany is a major theme which threads its way through most of his works, there are other themes which are interwoven with the Heimkehrer situation. These other themes add complexity to his works. Interpersonal relationships, the need for hope, and the question of the nature of God all play important roles in what he expressed in his writing. Since the question of Borchert's God concept is the focus of this thesis, it will be used to show that Borchert's works were not as one dimensional as was at first assumed by Borchert scholars.[182]

Borchert's first short story was "Die Hundeblume", which to some extent may be autobiographical.[183] One is introduced into the story with Borchert's description of the prison doors slamming shut behind the prisoner. This is followed by the prisoner believing that he has heard God's voice in the confines of his cell; this, however, turns out not to be the case. As the prisoner goes on his daily walk around the periphery of the prison walls, he begins to develop a hatred for the man who walks directly in front of him, finally believing that the other man's sole purpose is to prevent him from picking the dandelion which has grown in the prison yard. Eventually he is able to pick the dandelion, and in so doing, feels that he has once more made contact with the outside world. The story is a characterization of how a man struggles with the despair of having been shut out of society. His one purpose in life becomes finding a way to pluck the lone dandelion which is growing in the prison yard, and to take it to his cell undetected. Eventually he accomplishes his goal, and is soothed by the thought that he has brought part of the outside world into his lonely cell.

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[182] Although not explicitly stated in Borchert interpretations, one may infer from the arguments presented by commentators that they view Borchert's God as having a single nature.

[183] Rühmkorf 67.

"Die Hundeblume" acts as a bridge between Borchert's early poetry which attempts to find God in nature, and his later works which grapple with the question of the relationship between man, organized religion, and God. As the man is first locked in his cell, he is overcome with loneliness and believes that someone else is in the room with him.[184] At first he believes that God has come to comfort him, but those thoughts are quickly dispelled as he realizes that he is the cell's only occupant. The feeling of God's closeness is illusory. Borchert, in his attempt to define God, follows this recognition with a number of other statements on the nature of God; or as Stark puts it, "in his redefinition of God."[185] In doing so, Borchert begins to move away from the traditional anthropocentric interpretation of God. He outlines his basis of who God is when he writes,

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[184] Borchert, Das Gesamtwerk 26.

> Gott, den sie den Guten nennen, ist nicht da. Und das was da war, das was sprach, war in dir. Vielleicht war es ein Gott aus dir--du warst es! Denn du bist auch Gott, alle, auch die Spinne und die Makrele sind Gott. Gott ist das Leben--das ist alles. Aber das ist so viel, daß er nicht mehr sein kann. Sonnst ist nichts. Aber dieses Nichts überwältigt uns oft.[186]

Borchert denotes God as the "All", as life itself. God is fully within the "all" of the world, mankind included.

Later in "Die Hundeblume" Borchert takes up a motif which again appears in Draußen vor der Tür. Here he describes the man, who walks ahead of him in the prison yard as a theologian. The simple fact that he is characterized as a theologian is not as telling as the attributes which Borchert ascribes to theologians, "Er sah verlogen aus wie ein Theologe, aber ich glaube, er war eigens aus der Hölle beurlaubt, mir das Pflücken meiner Blume völlig unmöglich zu machen."[187] One sees immediately that Borchert did not have a high opinion of theologians, that he held them to be liars who kept man from grasping onto hope. It is the theologian that stands between the man and his symbol of hope, between him and God. A little later in the story one is given more information on the man who is called the Theologian. In his former life he was a locksmith, who had had an accident while working on a church.[188] Again one is reminded of what Borchert says about the church and how it serves to separate man from God; in Draußen vor der Tür, it is the walls that keep man and God from direct contact.[189]

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[185] Stark 62.

[186] Borchert, Das Gesamtwerk 26.

The next story in which Borchert makes extensive allusions to the relationship between man and God is "Ein Sonntagmorgen."[190] The Kafkaesque tone of the story is unmistakable, due to the frustrating situation in which the characters find themselves. The story takes place on a Sunday morning, just after the prisoners have been allowed to listen to a sermon on the radio. The guard pompously marches back and forth along the cell block and allows the prisoners to present their petitions to him. However, only one of the inmates chooses to participate in a "dialogue" with the guard while the others listen at their doors. All except for three participate: one too busy tearing up newspaper to be used as toilet paper, the second consumed with self-pity, and the third too busy talking to the guard to listen. Borchert accentuates the dehumanizing aspects of the man to God relationship, in the manner in which the guard refers to the prisoners by their numbers, rather than their names. The situation is further exacerbated by the fact that the guard is powerless to act upon the prisoners' requests. Bureaucratic rules prevent any action on his part, even on the most trivial of solicitations.[191]

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[187] Borchert, Das Gesamtwerk 35. My emphasis on "verlogen."

[188] Borchert, Das Gesamtwerk 36.

[189] Borchert, Das Gesamtwerk 149.

[190] Borchert, Die traurigen Geranien 84-94. There are four intervening short stories: "Tui Hoo", "Alle Milchgeschäfte heißen Hinsch", "Hamburg", "Nasenbein" (apparently lost), and "Marguerite". Although some may intend some allusions to God, it is not at all clear that Borchert is referring to "God".

The one prisoner who does petition the guard always asks for the same thing, to be allowed to have his toothbrush. However, the guard tells him this is against the rules, because prisoners are not allowed access to their belongings, which are in storage. The prisoner then requests that the guard retrieve it for him. But, this is also denied, because the guards are not allowed to go through the belongings of the prisoners without the prisoner's authorization. The prisoner then asks how this authorization might be obtained. To which the answer is, "Ja, schreiben Sie ein Gesuch."[192] The prisoner then asks for pen and paper, so that he may go through the proper channels. Again the request is denied, because prisoners are only allowed to write once every eight weeks, and that he has had the opportunity to write four weeks ago. The prisoner answers that he had written to his lawyer at that time, which appears to make no impression upon the guard. The prisoner finally resigns himself to the fact that he will not be able to request his toothbrush, because other things take priority. One is left with the impression that the same scene will replay itself Sunday after Sunday, just as it has on previous Sundays.

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[191] One may note that a parallel exists between Borchert's guard and Kafka's Türhüter.

Borchert, in "Ein Sonntagmorgen," depicts the estrangement which exists between man and God (represented by the guard). Although there is the illusion of dialogue between man and God, as illustrated by the conversation which takes place between the guard and the prisoner, no action can flow from it. In doing so, Borchert demonstrates the futility of prayer. The guard (God) takes pleasure in the one activity in which He may still engage man -- listening to his prayers. However, for man it becomes a form of spiritual torture, realizing it is futile. God's acting on the petitions of man has been curtailed by the bureaucracy which has grown up around Him. It is the same bureaucracy which has reduced the sixteen year old, number 17, to wallow in self-pity--he is serving a sentence for having stolen a bicycle--through its harsh sanctions for trivial transgressions.

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[192] Borchert, Die traurigen Geranien 91.

In "Generation ohne Abschied"[193] Borchert appears to leave his own prison experiences behind, although they do reappear later in his short stories.[194] "Generation ohne Abschied" may be seen as a turning point for Borchert, in that it is the point of departure for his search for a new God. Borchert, in "Generation ohne Abschied," accuses the previous generation of not having given his generation a God that meets its needs, "Aber sie gaben uns keinen Gott mit, der unser Herz hätte halten können, wenn die Winde dieser Welt es umwirbelt."[195] The crime of the previous generation is one of omission rather than commission, and now they pray for a God to ease the suffering of those who will have to cope with a Germany which lies in ashes.[196] But, this appears to be to no avail. The new generation must find its own way, including a new God, "Vielleicht sind wir voller Ankunft zu einem neuen Lieben, zu einem neuen Lachen, zu einem neuen Gott."[197] From this point on, Borchert's discussion of God becomes a search for the nature and being of a new God, who will help in dealing with the horrors of the past and present. However, even in this, Borchert himself has trouble in that he continues to struggle with the guilt of the past, not having found the new God who will ease the pain and lift his burden.

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[193] Borchert, Das Gesamtwerk 59-61.

[194] See Rühmkorf 63-7. Borchert had been incarcerated twice during the Second World War, once for his negative commentary concerning the National Socialists in a letter, and a second time for a satiric parody he did of Goebbels while he was serving on the Russian Front.

[195] Borchert, Das Gesamtwerk 59.

[196] Borchert, Das Gesamtwerk 60.

Borchert's "Gespräch über den Dächern,"[198] an essay contemplating a city at night written for his friend Bernhard Meyer-Marwitz, continues in the same vein as "Generation ohne Abschied." However, Borchert has left behind what ought to have been done in the past, that is, the older generation should have passed a God on to the new generation, and moved on to the present situation of Germany. The new generation finds itself surrounded by the noise and chaos of the big city--"Gebrüll" as Borchert calls it--with part of that chaos being God.[199] The city, which Borchert describes, is without God, because it serves to lock God (that is nature) out.[200] This locking out of God from the city appears to harken back to "Grossstadt" where the city is identified in the second stanza as a whore--an obvious reference to the whore of Babylon. Borchert furthermore identifies the mass of humanity with the city when he writes, "Wir allein sind diese Stadt. Wir ganz allein, ohne Gott, ohne Gnade, wir sind die Stadt."[201] indicating that, for Borchert, man's life, if God has no part to play in his existence, becomes like the noise of the city. Borchert further believes that the city teaches a bitter lesson in that man comes to believe that he has been deceived by the supposed God of love and good.[202]

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[197] Borchert, Das Gesamtwerk 61.

[198] Borchert, Das Gesamtwerk 48-58.

[199] Borchert, Das Gesamtwerk 49.

Borchert begins to formulate the theme which is to become one of the most quoted passages from Draußen vor der Tür. In "Gespräch über den Dächern" he writes, "Aber keiner hat ihn [God] versprochen. Wir rufen, wir flehen, wir brüllen nach morgen. Und keiner gibt uns Antwort."[203] This call to God for an answer is found in the last words which Beckmann speaks at the end of the play,[204] and is another occurrence of the lack of response from the prison guard in

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[200] Borchert, Das Gesamtwerk 50.

[201] Borchert, Das Gesamtwerk 53.

[202] Borchert, Das Gesamtwerk 54.

[203] Borchert, Das Gesamtwerk 55.

[204] Borchert, Das Gesamtwerk 165.

"Ein Sonntagmorgen."[205] "Gespräch über den Dächern," however continues on where Draußen vor der Tür leaves the audience to ponder this question. Despite his own despair Borchert continues to believe in life, because he still loves life too much to give it up. He says, "Hast du nicht begriffen, daß ich dieses Leben doch liebe."[206]

"Billbrook"[207] is the one work where the central character is not a German. In Borchert's choice of a foreign character he was possibly hoping to introduce a new perspective; it is a foreigner who looks upon what is left of Germany. The story centres around a flight-sergeant in the RCAF who discovers his name on a sign naming a suburb of Hamburg. The next day Bill Brook sets out to visit "his part of Town,"[208] but does not realize that it is too far away for him to reach on foot in one day. As he travels on the road, he notices that the city is becoming ever more desolate, and eventually runs back to the city of the living, having seen the destruction of which he was a part.

Fickert correctly identifies Bill Brook from Hopedale, Labrador as a Christ figure, but unfortunately does not go into much detail on why he is such.[209] Past scholars have remained with the old explanation; that his aborted trip to the part of Hamburg called Billbrook is symbolic of Christ's passion. However, Fickert may in this case be jumping to conclusions. The first indication Borchert gives of Bill Brook being a Christ figure is the identification of the main character's name with that of the suburb Billbrook. More than once, Bill Brook expresses the thought that it is part of the city--just as Christians bear the name of Christ. Also the fact that Borchert notes his home town to be Hopedale--valley of hope--indicates that he is a heavenly messenger of sorts.[210] As Bill Brook walks to "his city" he sees first hand the destruction that he was a part of.

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[205] See page 71.

[206] Borchert, Das Gesamtwerk 56.

[207] Borchert, Das Gesamtwerk 75-98.

[208] Borchert, Das Gesamtwerk 76.

Along the way, Bill Brook sees the faces of suffering little children, and even stops to chat with two men who are fishing, a possible allusion to the fisherman that Christ called to follow him by the Sea of Galilee.[211] Bill Brook offers them a package of cigarettes, which the older man accepts, but the younger one, who has only one leg, rejects, by throwing them one by one into the water.[212] Bill Brook finally realizes that the younger man has nothing but hatred for him, and that it would be better if he left. He eventually realizes that he will not be able to make it to "his part of the city." As he turns back, he is suddenly gripped by the horror which he finds himself in and begins running as fast as he can. Bill Brook returns to what is described as the city of the living.[213] Upon returning to his hotel room, he sits down to write a letter home, but even though he wishes to tell them of the atrocities he has just witnessed, he can only reminisce about home.

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[209] Fickert 26.

[210] Borchert goes into great detail when describing the location of the obscure little hamlet in Labrador, thus indicating that his choice of the name Hopedale had a specific significance. The only detail he seems to have made an error with is that Labrador was not at that time part of the Canadian Confederation, but was still a colony of Britain.

[211] Borchert, Das Gesamtwerk 84-88.

In "Billbrook" one sees how Borchert depicts Christ (God in so far as he is understood to be God's son) as having turned his back on humans who were in a desperate situation. However, Borchert's God does not turn his back on man out of malice or indifference and because he felt hated, but out of the sheer horror of what he saw that mankind had come to.[214]

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[212] Borchert often uses the cigarettes as gifts in his stories, most significantly in "Die drei dunkeln Könige" where they take on the role of one of the gifts offered to the Christ child in the biblical recollection of his birth.

[213] Borchert, Das Gesamtwerk 90.

[214] Borchert later inverts this position in Draußen vor der Tür, when he has God point out to Beckmann that it is man rather than God who has turned his back.

Borchert continues with the same theme in "Jesus macht nicht mehr mit,"[215] when again he has Christ--this time the main character even bears the nickname Jesus--turn his back on the horror which mankind is involved in. In the story, Borchert tells of a soldier, whose duty it is to measure graves, so that they are made to the correct specifications. The soldier, nicknamed Jesus because of his gentle appearance, decides that he can no longer fulfill his obligations, and walks away from the scene, for which he is placed on report.

Borchert takes "Jesus macht nicht mehr mit" one step further than in "Billbrook," in a scene where "Jesus" is accused of shirking his responsibility, because he refused to lie down in yet another grave to make sure that it is the correct size for its future occupant. Borchert uses the imagery of the soldier called Jesus as a means of illustrating Christ dying for man, so that the readers will reevaluate the cost of war; he graphically depicts Jesus as dying for each man that falls in the field. As "Jesus" looks at his gloves--a reference to the scars which were left by the nails that held Christ to the cross--he realizes the insanity of what is going on around him, and refuses to be party to it any longer. The reader, however, is aware that the "Jesus" of Borchert's story is incapable of changing what is happening on the battlefield. Thus Christ (God) is unable to change what is happening in the world.

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[215] Borchert, Das Gesamtwerk 178-81.

From Christ's refusal of his theological duty, Borchert moves to an investigation of how Christ is still evident in the world. In "Das Brot"[216] he begins to use a motif which becomes a mainstay of the works that are to follow. It appears Borchert came to some sort of decision regarding God and how He makes himself known to humankind. In "Das Brot" Borchert replays a pseudo-communion scene when the old woman offers her portion of bread to her husband, who on the previous night had gone down to the kitchen and had taken more than his share of the available bread. In her sharing of the bread with her husband, she is sharing the body of Christ, in that the bread is that which keeps her alive. She thus gives her life for her husband, as Christ symbolized giving his life at the last supper. Hans Dück believes that in this passage, as in no other, Borchert's title as a nihilist comes into question, due to the love expressed by the couple.[217]

The bread crumbs also become an important motif, as they are all that is left of the bread, and give evidence of the old man's deceit in "Das Brot."[218] They appear once more in "Der Kaffee ist undefinierbar"[219] as being representative of a communal meal. Here a group of people are sitting around a table in a cafe and one of the characters, a Heimkehrer, "knipste . . . ein paar Krümel vom Tisch . . . ."[220] The bread crumbs serve as a reminder of the body of Christ accusing man of his crimes, but are barely perceptible, and easily removed from view.

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[216] Borchert, Das Gesamtwerk 304-6.

[217] Hans-Udo Dück, "'Das Brot,'" Interpretationen zu Wolfgang Borchert, eds. Rupert Hirschenauer and Albrecht Weber (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1962) 96.

"Hinter den Fenstern ist Weihnachten,"[221] is a story in which Borchert juxtaposes the reality of Christmas in a bunker at the front with the Christmas a soldier imagines is taking place at home. One once again finds the bread motif prominent.[222] Again it serves as a means of establishing contact between people. Since the scene is at Christmas, one can only see the bread as representing the body of Christ which was meant to bring people together. Although, superficially, one might judge the Christ allusion to be weak in this story, the fact that it is preceded by a story with a strong reference to communion in Christ,"Der Kaffee ist undefinierbar," and followed by "Gottes Auge" which also contains a strong illustration of communion, one ought to assume that Borchert is again using the bread motif in the same manner.

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[218] Borchert, Das Gesamtwerk 306.

[219] Borchert, Das Gesamtwerk 195-201.

[220] Borchert, Das Gesamtwerk 199.

[221] Borchert, Die traurigen Geranien 119-123.

[222] Borchert, Die traurigen Geranien 122.

"Gottes Auge" is perhaps the most enigmatic of Borchert's short stories. Fickert believes that it stresses the humanity of Christ, in that Borchert gives God a physical body, which man sits down to dine at.[223] The story revolves around a cod fish which has been prepared for dinner. As the boy in the story looks into his soup bowl, he sees its eye staring back at him. His mother explains to him, that it is God's eye. The boy then assumes that his mother has cooked God, and that he now is lying in his bowl. Finally having come face to face with "God" himself, the boy asks the eye for the reason for his grandfather's death. As can be expected, the eye remains silent.

The questioning involved in "Gottes Auge" echoes the questions that Beckmann puts to God in Draußen vor der Tür. God has been reduced to a lifeless object which stares out into the world, and is eventually rejected by the young boy, when he pushes the bowl away from himself, resulting in the eye being spilt on the floor. As the boy leaves the kitchen, he waits for a moment at the door for an answer, but none is forthcoming. Finally he exits loudly, without looking back.

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[223] Fickert 28.

One may conclude from the text of "Gottes Auge" that Borchert is dealing with the misunderstood relationship between man and God. Man questions God, expecting him to answer or act upon his petitions. God, however, mutely stares back. Man becomes frustrated by God's silence, and eventually rejects Him for not having his requests granted. God's silence, however, does serve a purpose, in that it causes man to act, and hopefully change the world for the better. It becomes incumbent upon man to accept God's silence and act himself, or reject God and devolve into self-pity, doing nothing, just as God appears to do nothing.

"Die drei dunkeln Könige" is a turning point for Borchert, and his understanding of God's relationship to man. In the retelling of Christ's birth as set in the ruins of post-war Germany, Borchert reconciles himself to the fact that hope for the future must come from within man himself God, rather than acting directly in the world, provides man with the means whereby he may save himself.

Weber believes that "Die drei dunkeln Könige" shows that, "Nacht, Frost und Tod sind überwunden in Glauben, die Menschen heimgekommen durch die Liebe in die Geborgenheit Gottes, in neuem Bewußtsein der Geburt des Erlösers."[224] Although Weber may be viewing the story from a too Christian perspective--forgetting that Borchert believed Christianity not to be the only answer--he is correct in interpreting the child as a saviour, bringing light into the world.[225] Borchert does indeed want the reader to reconsider Christ, but as fully human. The sight of the child causes the three visitors to give of themselves,[226] and even tempers the anger of his father to some degree. Borchert portrays Christ as someone who ought to bring people together, rather than divide them as so often happens. The child is a catalyst for the communion of the shared tobacco, and thus affects the reconciliation between men.

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[224] Weber 108.

In "Preußens Gloria" Borchert portrays God as a tragic figure, driven to suicide by the deceit of men. Man is held ultimately responsible for the death of God, in that the guard (God) becomes a convenient scapegoat for the crimes that they themselves have committed.

The question Borchert leaves in the mind of the reader is what now? This question is the answer to God's silence. By causing the death of God, man is no longer left with a scapegoat for his future debacles. Without God to hold responsible, man must confront his own role in the atrocities of war. This same theme is taken up once more in "Die Kegelbahn."[227]

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[225] Weber 107.

[226] Fickert 29.

[227] Borchert, Das Gesamtwerk 169-70.

Borchert's last short story, before he turned his attention to Draußen vor der Tür, was "Nachts schlafen die Ratten doch." This story takes place before the ruins of a bombed out house, which is watched over by a young boy by the name of Jürgen. It is significant that Borchert uses a first name in this case, because in doing so he stresses the individuality of entering into dialogue with God.[228] Jürgen hopes to keep the rats, which inhabit the ruins, from eating the body of his dead younger brother, who is buried under the rubble of his former home. As he keeps watch over the ruins, an old man appears to him, and offers him comfort in the form of a lie and some rabbits that the boy may take home. There may be some question as to whether the old man actually represents God, but these doubts may be quickly dispelled by comparing his appearance to that of the baby in "Die drei dunkeln Könige." In "Die drei dunkeln Könige" there is no question that the child is a representation of the Christ child, when the light from the stove gives the appearance of a halo around its head. Borchert employs the same sort of imagery with the old man in "Nachts schlafen die Ratten doch." Here the old man appears to Jürgen with the sun behind him, giving a halo effect as pointed out by

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[228] This is one of the only places where Borchert uses a first name to identify a character, the usual being: a surname, nickname, job title, or a simple description such as "a man" etc.

Christmann.[229] One may thus, in agreement with Fickert, view the old man as a God figure.[230] God appears in this case to be very real, as opposed to other stories where He is merely alluded to, or as in Draußen for der Tür where God is part of Beckmann's dream world. God is quite ordinary in appearance; he is not surrounded by the fanfare which religious myth tends to cloak Him in.

God, however, even in this very ordinary form is able to affect change in the young boy's life, lifting the burden of death from his young shoulders.[231] Borchert demonstrates that God's help takes the form of the unexpected, in that He does nothing to change the physical surrounding of the boy--as man often demands of God. Rather He affects a spiritual change. Borchert hopes that the reader will be able to look past his material needs and accept God's spiritual succour, even if it does come in the form of a lie. Having taken care of Jürgen's spiritual needs, the old man offers physical help as well, if only the boy will wait for him to return with a rabbit.[232] The God presented by Borchert, in "Nachts schlafen die Ratten doch," is positive. A God who is still able to exert a measure of influence on the world, even though it is not that which Christianity tends to preach.

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[229] Christmann 79.

[230] Fickert 25.

[231] Christmann 80. He believes that it is the burden of death, which is man's burden in the aftermath of the war.

[232] Many Germans after the Second World War kept rabbits to supplement their diets.

Robert Pichl considers Borchert's only published play, Draußen vor der Tür, to be the centrepiece of Borchert's works, from which one may bring unity to the rest of his works.[233] However, interpreting Borchert's works from the basis of Draußen vor der Tür leads to the erroneous conclusions of Rühmkorf, that being the judgement that Borchert is a Nihilist and Gottesleugner. It might thus be better to say that Draußen vor der Tür is an expansion of works Borchert had already written.[234] In it one finds motifs which Borchert had already experimented with, such as: being locked out of society; man's betrayal of God; and God being held captive by the religious establishment. One should view Draußen vor der Tür as a point on a continuum, rather than one seminal work upon which all the others rest.

Draußen vor der Tür revolves around a character by the name of Beckmann, who has just returned to Germany after three years as a prisoner of war in the Soviet Union. Beckmann discovers that his wife is living with another man, thinking that he had died, and attempts to commit suicide by throwing himself into the Elbe. However, the Goddess of the Elbe throws him back onto the shore and urges him to live out his life. As Beckmann attempts to once more enter into society, he finds a girl with whom he goes home, but this is short lived, for her husband returns home from the war that same night. Beckmann wanders the streets, and finds his way to the home of his former commanding officer. Beckmann attempts to unburden his guilt for the death of 11 men under his command, who died in an assult ordered by the officer. However, the colonel refuses to accept the blame. The colonel finally offers Beckmann some civilian clothing, but Beckmann refuses, and returns to the street. Next, Beckmann meets a cabaret director, who, after some convincing, listens to Beckmann's song, but judges that no one wants to hear what Beckmann has to say. Through the entire play, Beckmann is accompanied by der Andere, Beckmann's double, who also urges him to live his life. Beckmann eventually finds his way to his parent's house, but there learns from Frau Kramer that his parents have committed suicide, due to their complicity with the Nazis. In the end Beckmann encounters God, who is but a pathetic shadow of His former self. This discovery leaves Beckmann with nothing to believe in; wondering whether someone will give him an answer.

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[233] Pichl 115.

[234] This difficulty can be avoided to a large degree when Borchert's works are read chronologically, according to composition.

God makes his first appearance on the stage of Draußen vor der Tür in the first scene of the play, where he engages Death in a dialogue. Borchert gives explicit instructions in his stage directions, that God's first reaction is to be that of horror, and not "Jämmerlichkeit".[235] Borchert thus echoes the horror that is present in Bill Brook as he flees from "his part of the city." God begins to cry because, as He explains to all who will listen, there is nothing He can do to change what has happened. God continues to say that He is the God in whom no one believes any longer, a phrase that He repeats throughout the play. God also states that man now only believes in death, and that it has taken His place.

In the opening dialogue one may note the first foreshadowing of Borchert's belief that man and God are interdependent. Karl Migner appears to have grasped this idea when he writes, "Mit dem Glauben der Menschen an ihn [God] steht und fällt seine Macht in ihrem Leben. Menschen, die sich von ihm gewendet haben, kann er nicht mehr helfen, er kann sie nur beklagen, sie beweinen."[236] Migner, however, does not address man's dependence on God. As is noted above, it is man's unbelief that prevents him from having a relationship with God. In man's rejection of God, he finds himself standing outside of society, just as he has locked God out of society.

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[235] Borchert, Das Gesamtwerk 104.

[236] Migner 11.

The second time God appears on stage, is when He comes face to face with Beckmann. God is not recognized immediately by Beckmann, who at first only suspects that the old man might be God. Beckmann, to allay his suspicions, asks: "Bist du der liebe Gott?" to which God answers: "Ich bin der liebe Gott."[237] The manner in which Borchert formulates both the question and answer goes a long way to explaining why scholars have interpreted Borchert's concept of God as being rather dismal. The key word is "lieber", indicating that Borchert is referring to the orthodox religious concept of God, rather than the authentic God, who has not been contaminated by theology, or the bureaucracy which serves to interpret the nature of God for the masses. In light of what Borchert had said earlier about the God of childhood, it becomes apparent that he had separated the Märchenbuchliebergott from the God he was searching for. Thus Draußen vor der Tür does not call God the supreme being into question, but the popular concept of God, which had been formulated by the Christian church over the centuries. It is the Märchenbuchliebergott who has no answers, because He has been turned into a paradox by the theologians, and is not consistent with the world as it really is.

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[237] Borchert, Das Gesamtwerk 147-48.

The public at the time of its first performance appears to have reacted to Borchert's denigration of the old God concept with more than a little indignation. They seem to have been angered by Borchert's portrayal of God as being impotent. One reviewer even goes so far as to say that Borchert ought to have either finished Him off completely or have left him in his position of majesty.[238] One can, however, hardly fault the audience for reaching such a conclusion, considering that scholars have since tried to either finish off Borchert's God, or raise Him to a mythical height, neither of which Borchert appears to have intended.[239]

Having completed Draußen vor der Tür in the space of seven days, Borchert once more turned his attention to short stories. He appears to have come to terms with God, because He does not appear in his next five stories, except for a vague reference to paradise in "Die Küchenuhr"[240] and an allusion to brotherly love found within the context of human contact in "Der viele viele Schnee."[241] However, neither of these two stories say anything about the nature of God himself. In fact God does not take a prominent position in his works again other than in a few isolated instances.

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[238] Bernd Kraske, "Draußen vor der Tür. Anmerkungen zur Hörspiel-Rezeption," Wolff, 52.

[239] Even Nietzsche does not appear to have had the heart to completely do away with God. In Nietzsche's works God continues to exist, even if it is only as a shadow of his former self.

[240] Borchert, Das Gesamtwerk 201-4.

[241] Borchert, Das Gesamtwerk 172-5.

With the short story "Die Kegelbahn," Borchert once more turned his attention to the question of God, however in this story he looked at the implications of a world without God. The story involves two soldiers in a machine gun nest who have become part of a giant, anonymous killing machine. They kill the enemy, for whom they have no particular animosity, simply because this is what they have been told to do. One of the soldiers even implicates God as being part of the mechanism when he states, "Aber Gott hat uns so gemacht."[242] This excuse, however, is quickly rebuffed by his companion, who replies, "Aber Gott hat eine Entschuldigung . . . es gibt ihn nicht."[243] The first soldier appears to be confused, and finally says, "Aber uns--uns gibt es . . . ."[244] With this statement Borchert brings to fruition the full implication of a world in which God no longer exists. It places the full blame for humanity's destructiveness on man himself, who, with the death of God, has run out of excuses for the misery he has inflicted upon himself.

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[242] Borchert, Das Gesamtwerk 170.

[243] Borchert, Das Gesamtwerk 170.

[244] Borchert, Das Gesamtwerk 170.

In Borchert's next work, "An diesem Dienstag,"[245] he appears to contradict his position in regard to the existence of God. Borchert shifts the scene of the story numerous times between an army hospital in Russia, a class room where a young girl learns that Krieg is spelt with a "g" as in Grube, and a battalion headquarters. In the staccato like tempo of the story Borchert recalls the mood of "Die Kegelbahn;" however, God is the only thing that keeps people going.[246] Borchert has moved beyond questioning God about the atrocities he allows, and recognizes the comfort He can bring into the midst of suffering. In emphasizing the positive aspects of God, Borchert articulates that even if God is impotent to change the physical world, a belief in God can still be of comfort to the individual, so that he may endure all the world has to offer.

"Die lange lange Straße lang"[247] acts as a parenthesis to "Die drei dunkeln Könige" in that it is a retelling of Christ's passion, as opposed to Christ's birth. In "Die lange lange Straße lang," Borchert presents Christ's Passion, employing a stream of consciousness as seen through the eyes of the Heimkehrer Fischer. Borchert once more stresses the humanity of Christ when he parodies a passage found in John 18:36, where Jesus says: "Mein Reich ist nicht von dieser Welt."[248] Borchert intones that humanity was spending too much time concentrating on heavenly rewards, rather than remedying its current condition. Borchert writes, "Mein Reich ist von dieser dieser Welt."[249] In doing so, Borchert urges the reader to concentrate on this world, rather than that which may or may not come.

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[245] Borchert, Das Gesamtwerk 191-94.

[246] Borchert, Das Gesamtwerk 194.

[247] Borchert, Das Gesamtwerk 244-64.

God once more makes a physical appearance in "Die lange lange Straße lang", however, on this occasion in the form of a street car conductor. Borchert informs the reader of the conductor's divinity by describing him as being neither good nor bad.[250] As the street car begins to move down its tracks, it becomes apparent that none of the passengers know what its final destination is.[251] Although the conductor acts as host, he has no control over the street car's direction. The streetcar simply moves along its tracks. Borchert, thus, again portrays God as being passive, and, though present, not in control.

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[248] The Luther translation.

[249] Borchert, Das Gesamtwerk 249.

[250] Borchert, Das Gesamtwerk 264. Borchert uses the same description when he refers directly to God in "Der Kaffee ist undefinierbar" 195.

[251] Borchert, Das Gesamtwerk 264.

Borchert reinforces God's passivity in "Der Kaffee ist undefinierbar," in that He is described as being neutral.[252] Borchert further describes Him as faceless, which also prevents him from having any ears to hear with.[253] All God does for humanity is allow them to breath.[254] Borchert has thus changed his position on God from "Ein Sonntagmorgen" where God can still hear man's petitions, to one where God no longer even hears.

Fickert claims that God, in "Der Kaffee ist undefinierbar," has become a side issue.[255] However, God, in this short story, is more than a parenthetical issue. Borchert's repeated descriptions of the faceless God throughout the story suggests that God is hovering over the scene as it unfolds, even though the characters may not be aware of His presence. As the four people in the story sit around a table in a cafe, it becomes apparent that the suicidal woman may as well be invisible, because no one at the table is really listening to what she is saying. At the end of the story, her chair is left empty, giving the impression that she has left to carry out her suicidal intentions. Even God being unable to help her, because of His inability to hear her. However, Borchert portays God as being no worse than the other's sitting at the table, because they do not really hear her either.

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[252] Borchert, Das Gesamtwerk 195.

[253] Borchert, Das Gesamtwerk 195.

[254] Borchert, Das Gesamtwerk 195.

[255] Fickert 23. Actually Fickert says that God has become "parenthetical", due to God being placed in parenthesis at the end of the story.

Borchert continues his mystical allusions in "Das ist unser Manifest."[256] God appears to hide in the shadows when Borchert writes,

> [Gott ist] Hinter allem, uniformiert, nackt oder sonstwie kostümiert, schattenhaft verschwankt in fremder fast scheuer ungeahnt grandioser Dimension: Du selbst. Deine Liebe. Deine Angst. Deine Hoffnung."[257]

One could say that Borchert was beginning to experience God mystically.

In Borchert's last 14 stories, he remains largely silent about God. His silence on God is broken only twice, in "Im Mai, im Mai schrie der Kuckuck"[258] and "Die Professoren wissen auch nix,"[259] and then only to say that God is ineffable.

At the end of his life, Borchert appears to have come to terms with God. Borchert's silence on the subject of God in the end could be misinterpreted as wanting nothing to do with God. However, the fact that Borchert feels that he cannot describe God suggests that he did indeed give God a great deal of consideration.

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[256] Borchert, Das Gesamtwerk 308-15.

[257] Borchert, Das Gesamtwerk 311.

[258] Borchert, Das Gesamtwerk 243.

[259] Borchert, Die traurigen Geranien 125-26.

In the second part of Borchert's motto for Draußen vor der Tür which was later omitted, he states,

> Eine Injektion Nihilismus
> bewirkt oft,
> daß man aus lauter Angst
> wieder Mut zu Leben bekommt.[260]

This motto could very well apply to all of Borchert's works, because it encapsulates all of what he was attempting to do with what he wrote. Borchert uses the term "Injektion" as a physician would, referring to the various serums which build anti-bodies within the human body. However, here he is speaking of man's spiritual body. In doing so, Borchert has prepared a mild form of the disease of nihilism and Godlessness, so that his audience may build up its defences against the real illness, which he envisioned to be much worse.

At the beginning of his short stories, Borchert begins with an intense questioning of God's nature, that is, whether He is good or evil. He appears to have rejected the idea that God only encompassed the good, due to the problem of evil being present in the world. Borchert, however, also rejects the notion of God as being evil. Thus Borchert is left with a God, who is neutral, allowing man to breathe, and then stepping back to become a silent observer as the world passes by.

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[260] Schröder, (1985) 21.

Borchert does not appear to be entirely satisfied with a neutral God either. Thus he once more delves into the question of His nature. However, Borchert eventually decides that God is ineffable, and that his attempts to articulate Him are in vain.

When analyzing the works of Borchert which deal with God, it becomes apparent that Borchert is operating with two distinct concepts of God. This fact has led to some confusion among scholars, because they are looking for a consistent characterization of God. The first God is the Märchenbuchliebergott of religious myth, which he soundly rejects as being incompatible with the reality of the world, and is portrayed as being feeble and impotent. The second is the authentic God for whom Borchert searched. Borchert thoroughly investigates the implications of the traditional Märchenbuchliebergott. Borchert concludes that this kind of God seems incapable of acting upon the world, because too much is expected of Him. Borchert takes to its logical conclusion the anthropomorphized God, and in doing so reveals His inadequacy in not living up to man's expectations. God is thus at odds with man, and man even accuses Him of not having lived up to His obligations. Thus man is moved to reject him as no longer pertinent.

Borchert's rejection of the old God, leads him to search for a new God, one who is independent of the whims of man, and who is above all accessible. Some scholars have identified the new God as death, as found in Draußen vor der Tür, but, this is to fall into the old trap of depicting Borchert as a nihilist. Death, however, should also be rejected as Borchert's God-concept, because he is also dependent upon man for his existence. For Borchert the true God remains to a large degree a mystery, but he appears certain that God is accessible to man, and that he offers spiritual peace.

IV. Conclusion: Borchert's New God

Borchert's God-concept is unquestionably unconventional. God, for Borchert, ought no longer be encumbered by the shackles of the religious establishment, and the individual should be free to enter into a direct relationship with Him. Borchert reveals completely the short-comings of a God who has been anthropomorphized to the point of absurdity.

Religion, or religious practice (i.e. the organized Church) is shown to be the culprit behind the ineffectuality of God. So, Borchert seeks to circumvent the bureaucracy which acts as a filtering agent. In doing so, Borchert regresses (progresses?) into a form of pietism, which allows for a merging with God. Here one sees what Borchert intended when he began his redefinition of God in "Die Hundeblume." God is no longer to be viewed as an external force, but one which is to be found within all of humanity, to which the individual can either say yes or no.[261]

To some degree Borchert can be seen as a nihilist, but only to the extent of the limitations which Borchert himself places on such a definition. He is a nihilist to the point of discarding the old God as no longer relevant. Having thrown out the old, worn out ideas, Borchert begins to reveal a new God in later works. As the new God becomes apparent, humanity can begin to embrace the hope which this new God brings. Humanity can thus once more face the future with confidence, because the burden of death has been lifted from its collective shoulders.

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[261] Adolf Klarmann, "Wolfgang Borchert: The Lost Voice of Germany," The Germanic Review 27 (1952), 41. Klarmann postulates that Borchert believed that God was waiting to be redeemed by man, just as man had been earlier redeemed by God through Christ.

Upon comparing Borchert's God-concept with that which is found in the works of Nietzsche and Barlach, one discovers Borchert's was not only operating within the context of his own wartime experience, but also that Borchert was bringing the thought of other literary and philosophical figures to bear on the problems associated with God in an imperfect world. Borchert investigates the full implications of Nietzsche's death of God, and how the world would regress into chaos if this were to be taken as truth. The weakness of God is also an important theme Borchert borrows from Nietzsche, in that God has become impotent. However, Borchert does not simply leave it at that, and demonstrates how God may once more become revitalized, by concentrating on God's spiritual relationship to man, rather than just the material world.

Borchert also borrows from the image of God as found in Barlach's expressionist plays Die Sündflut and Der Findling. This concept of God then becomes a second important basis from which Borchert formulates his own concept of God. It is no longer necessary for God to be depicted in an orthodox manner. God came to man in an unexpected form, finding his divinity in other forms than the theologian would have the general public believe. Borchert uses this same method to show God as being in need of man's redemption.

Borchert's experimentation with a reevaluation of God appears to have some effect on present theological thought. Hans Küng, in On Being a Christian, does a brief analysis of Borchert's "Jesus macht nicht mehr mit,"[262] and believes it useful in instigating a reevaluation of the "typical" Christ. Küng further states, "[that such] literary portrayals . . . were by no means lacking in aesthetic quality or theological depth," and " made brilliant use of literary imagination and psychology in a tacit attempt to update the Gospels, reading into them what cannot be read out of them."[263]

But the question remains, how does this new interpretation of Borchert's God-concept affect the future interpretation of Borchert's works? It puts into question the notion, that Borchert was an affirmed nihilist. It also frees Borchert's literature from the shadow of the Second World War and makes it universal, rather than relevant only to those who experienced the horror of the aftermath of Germany's destruction. Borchert, thus, becomes a literary figure, rather than simply a reporter of the events of his time.

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[262] Hans Küng, On Being a Christian, trans. Edward Quinn (New York: Fount Paperbacks, 1978.) 141.

[263] Küng 139.

In closing, it is important to note that there are still many gaps in Borchert scholarship which need to be addressed. The first, and probably most important, shortcoming, is the lack of a complete collection of Borchert's works. Many of his plays, poems, short stories and letters are simply unavailable. There have been rumours since 1949, that a collection of Borchert's letters will be published by Rowolht, however 39 years later nothing has materialized. A publication compiling Borchert's letters is particularly vital, because it would make readily available material which may lead to a further reevalutation of Borchert's works.

A second less vital, but still important area which is in need of investigation is the content of Borchert's personal library. Such a work would shed considerable light on the origins of Borchert's literary ideas, which up until now have been largely overlooked. Another area which remains to a large extent a mystery, is the affect the Nazis had on his education.[264] If this could be determined, one could analyze Borchert's works from the perspective of his reacting to the National Socialist regime.

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[264] Hans Popper pointed out these two voids in his letter of the 10th of July 1990 to the author.

Once the above deficiencies are remedied, a more thorough analysis of Borchert's works will be possible. It will also have the effect of allowing scholars to rely much less on anecdotal evidence, as has been the case in the past.

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APPENDIX

Chronology of Borchert Works:
1938-45
Reiterlied (1938)
Meiner Freundin Lil Wolf (1944)
15 Verses to his mother in a letter dated July 17, 1945.
- Der kleine Ketzer
- Trost in Religion
- Christliche Ethik
- Christliche Geduld
- Amouren--so und so
- Einkehr
- Vom Glauben
- Oder nicht?
- Ich Sterbe meinem Tod
- Kreislauf
- Unsterblichkeit
- Der Große Unbekannte
- Ich bete auch
- Wo ist Mephisto
- Exodos

Laterne, Nacht und Sterne: Gedichte um Hamburg (published December 1946)
- Leuchtturm
- Laternentraum
- Abendlied
- In Hamburg
- Legende
- Regen
- Der Kuß
- Aranka
- Abschied
- Prolog zu einem Sturm
- Muscheln, Muscheln
- Der Wind und die Rose
- Der graurotgrüne Großstadt
- Grossstadt
- Antiquitäten

Nachgelassene Gedichte
- Kinderlied
- Versuch es
- Gedicht
- Brief aus Rußland
- Der Mond lügt
- Der Vogel
- Am Fenster eines Wirtshauses beim Steinhuder Meer
- Draußen

- -Winterabend
- -Nachts
- -Die Nacht
- -Liebeslied
- -Liebesgedicht
- -Abschied
- -Südfrüchte

1946:
Die Hundeblume (H-A)
Tui-Hoo (T-T)
Alle Milchleute heißen Hinsch (T-T)
Hamburg (H-SS)
Nasenbein (apparently lost)
Marguerite (T-P)
Ein Sonntagmorgen (T-P)
Eisenbahnen, nachmittags und nachts (H-U)
Generation ohne Abschied (H-U)
Gespräch über den Dächern (H-A)
Von drüben nach drüben (NE)
Billbrook (H-SS)
Schischyphusch (NE)
Die Elbe (H-SS)
Jesus macht nicht mehr mit (AD-S)
Das Brot (NE)
Hinter den Fenstern ist Weihnachten (T-P)
Gottes Auge (NE)
Stimmen sind da (H-A)
in der Luft (H-A)
in der Nacht (H-A)
Später Nachmittag (T-T)
Die drei dunklen Könige (AD-S)
Preußens Gloria (T-P)
Die Krähen fliegen abends nach Hause (H-A)
Vorbei vorbei (H-U)
Bleib doch Giraffe (H-U)
Die Stadt (H-U)
Vier Soldaten (AD-S)
Die traurigen Geranien (T-T)

1947:
January 1947
Nachts schlafen die Ratten doch (H-K)
Draußen vor der Tür (D)

Before he left for Basel 1947
Die Küchenuhr (AD-K)
Die Kirschen (T-T)
Das Holz für Morgen (T-T)
Der viele viele Schnee (AD-S)

Das Kanguruh (AD-K)
Die Kegelbahn (AD-S)
An diesem Dienstag (AD-S)
Lesebuchgeschichten (NE)
Vielleicht hat sie ein rosa Hemd (AD-K)
Die lange lange Straße lang (AD-K)
Die Nachtigall singt (AD-S)
Der Kaffee ist undefinierbar (AD-K)
Das ist unser Manifest (NE)
Die Katze war im Schnee erfroren (AD-S)
Er hatte auch viel Ärger mit den Kriegen (AD-K)
Mein bleicher Bruder (AD-S)
Unser kleiner Mozart (AD-K)
Der Schriftsteller (NE)
Maria, alles Maria (T-P)
Im Mai, im Mai schrie der Kuckuck (AD-K)

The following are not accounted for in Borchert's chronology
Der Rahmbonbon (T-P)
Die Professoren wissen auch nix (T-P)
Liebe blaue graue Nacht (T-T)
Das Gewitter (T-T)
Ching-Ling die Fliege (T-P)
Unser Pusteblumendasein (not published)
The start of his planned novel "Persil bleibt Persil" (Rühmkorf identifies the start date as 11. January 1947)

Works appearing which are not accounted for by Rühmkorf:
Merkwürdig (?) (T-P)
Die Mauer (?) (T-T)
Radi (written between autumn 1946 and summer 1947) (AD-S)
Yorick, der Narr (1938) (unpublished)
Der Käsenladen (1940) (unpublished)
Granvella! Der schwarze Kardinal (1940) (unpublished)
Arti und Mira. Eine irdische Legende (1940) (unpublished)

Abreviations Used in the Appendix

AD-K= An diesem Deinstag, "Und keiner weiß wohin" (published December 1947)
AD-S= An diesem Dienstag, "Im Schnee, im sauberen Schnee" (published December 1947)
H-A= Die Hundeblume, "Die Ausgelieferten" (published early summer 1947)
H-SS= Die Hundeblume, "Stadt, Stadt: Mutter zwischen Himmel und Erde" (published early summer 1947)
H-U= Die Hundeblume, "Unterwegs" (published early summer 1947)
NE= "Nachgelassene Erzählungen" (published in Das Gesamtwerk 1949)

T-P= Die traurigen Geranien und andere Geschichten aus dem Nachlaß, "Preußens Gloria" (published March 1962)
T-T= Die traurigen Geranien und andere Geschichten aus dem Nachlaß, "Die traurigen Geranien" (published March 1962)

The above chronology of Borchert's works was compiled from the notes found in Das Gesamtwerk, Peter Rühmkorf's Wolfgang Borchert: In Selbstzeugnissen und Bilddokumenten, Claus Schröder's Wolfgang Borchert, and Alexandre de Sterio's "Wolfgang Borchert: Eine Literatursoziologische Interpretation." It does not claim to be comprehensive, in that many of Borchert's texts remain in manuscript form at the archives in Hamburg. It, however, does give an indication of the order in which Borchert created his works. If one reads Borchert's works in the above order, one discovers that Borchert presents his concept of God in four distinct groupings. Borchert's early treatment of God, as found in his poetry, is characterized by a childlike image. The second is found in his earlier prose works, where God is still seen as reaching out to man, but organized religion keeps man separate from God. The third period revolves around Draußen vor der Tür. God is seen as being locked outside of society; man having turned his back on God. The final period portrays God as ineffable, with man searching to understand him.

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